

BOOK II.01WICKED...and Spotless as the Lamb

Chapter One

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I hear Melvin stirring early. He tells me the funeral will be Thursday afternoon in Moores Corner Church. I put on the clothes I wore last night even though they are still damp. I open my suitcase and take out my suit and hang it in the closet. Melvin is already dressed. We neither of us talk about the folks. When we go down to the kitchen, Gramma Briggs tries to get us to eat a good breakfast, but I have only a dish of hot oatmeal. Clayt and Larry are already up and dressed and have had breakfast.

I have a lot of questions but don't ask them, just listen to what is being said. From what I pick up, I learn that it was late morning when Pop shot himself. Mom was home by herself. Larry was in high school, Clayt working at the shop in the stockroom with Pop when Pop was called to the front office. He hadn't returned by noon. At lunch time somebody came to tell Clayt he was being fired: Friday would be his last day in the shop. They wanted to know where Pop was and he didn't know. Then along in the afternoon somebody came and told him Pop was dead. Clayt got his lunchpail and walked the three miles home where he found Aunt Gloria alone and distracted because Mom had brought her an apple and somehow slipped away. The middle

glazier

of the afternoon she cleverly brought Aunt Gloria an apple and went through the little entry into the barn -- to the backhouse Aunt Gloria thought. She had no idea where Mom had gone to.

Mel had been staying in Greenfield, living at Bernice's, and had just got a job for a hardware store. When the Cookes got the news, Mr. Cooke located Mel and drove him to Moores Corner. Somebody from Moores Corner called McCarthy's Funeral Home in Greenfield and they came for Pop's body. Mel brought the Model A back to Cooke's and sent the telegram to Middlebury. Gramp and Uncle Perry had been sawing the pond down in late morning when they saw Pop drive past hell bent for election, the Ford steaming. At the house, he stopped by the side door, went through the long hall to the kitchen and met Gram coming out of the buttery with a tray of cookies. Pop hurried past the telephone partition into the little buttery, saying, "I want the shotgun to kill a skunk out back." He disappeared almost immediately breaching the gun, and ramming shells into both barrels. Gram heard the shot and ran to the cowbarn, and came back and called Uncle Maurice because there was no phone at the mill.

"Maurice, something terrible has happened. Stop by the mill and get Dan and Perry and come as fast as you can!"

Back in Northfield Farms, when Clayt got home and learned that Mom was missing, he found Aunt Gloria so incoherent he went up to Ralph Lynches and Ralph drove to Brattleboro and brought Gramma Briggs to stay with Aunt Gloria till Uncle Henry came to get her, and Uncle Forrest could come down from Brattleboro after he got through work.

Mom must have taken the back stairs from the barn down into the henyard and from there across the backyard to the ferry road. Warren Billings was coming up driving some heifers, and spoke to her. According to his story later, she was half walking, half running. She didn't answer. He was too busy with the animals to pay attention, not having heard anything about Pop. So, after they got worried it took some time to get on her track. By the time Larry got home from school, everybody was looking for her. Clayt sent Larry to follow the course of the brook to the River. It was near dark when they started searching the river bank. The men in the neighborhood got a boat and grappling hooks and followed the current in shore and down to the promontory from where we used to throw our lines out with Mom sitting high on the bank because she was afraid of water. That was what I put together in bits and pieces Tuesday morning. We were too numb to do any planning.

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In the late morning Melvin gets out the Model A Ford and drives us to Millers Falls to the Tool Company but not

to the stock room. He swings the car in a U turn under the portico at the office. He gets out fast and tells the rest of us to stay put. I am too lopy not to just sit there but I wonder what he is up to. I think we ought to have gone in all of us together and asked to see Mr. Avison. We just sit there. I'm in front, Clayt and Larry in back. I don't have enough gumption to complain to Melvin or get out and go in after him. He seems to know what he is doing and doesn't want the rest of us with him. I stay in the front seat without saying anything to Clayt and Larry. If Mel had been summoned ahead of time, he didn't say so. It crosses my mind the factory workers may have collected some money. Or Avison may have called Mel yesterday afternoon in Greenfield because he wanted to talk to him. I have no clear notion what is going on.

In a few minutes Mel comes back, gets in, and starts the motor without saying a word. We drive to North Leverett to Gramp's. There's no sign of Gramp and Gram. Aunt Helen is there and gives us fried potatoes and sausage and bread and butter and brings one of Gram's pies from the pantry. She tells us the plans for the funeral Thursday -- Mr. Truesdale will come down from Bernardston where he is preaching and Mr. Wightman from Northampton. We all know Mr. Truesdale because he used to live in the parsonage in Leverett Center and be the pastor there and preach in Moores Corner Sunday evenings. When we stayed out to

Gramp's we used to go with Aunt Maud to the white clapboarded church on the hilltop above Moores Corner schoolhouse where mornings she played the organ for Sunday school, and for service Sunday evening.

Gramma Briggs was famous for her custard pies that she carried to Wednesday night socials held two or three times a year in the Sunday School room off the meeting room that had two long rows of highback benches, and a center aisle between. The church is closed days except Sundays. All the time you are in there singing hymns and listening to the sermon, you never get away from a mouldy smell from rusty, red-orange cushions, an odor like fruit beginning to spoil, penetrating but not unpleasant, saturating the stagnant air.

Sometimes when I was on vacation out to Gramp's Mr. Truesdale would drop by the house -- always in late afternoon --and be invited for supper. He was soft-voiced and accommodating and never mentioned money. At table he asked a blessing, the only time anybody ever did even at Thanksgiving. Loyce married his son. I used to hear Mom talk about Mr. Wightman who was their minister when she was a girl. I don't think I ever saw him. He must have gone from the Corners before I was old enough to realize who he was.

We are pretty long faced during lunch at Gramp's. Aunt Helen tries to be cheerful but makes a hard go of it.

She never completely covers up a grating whine in her voice. Gramp and Gram have gone with Uncle Maurice and Uncle Perry to Green-field. We hang around for a half hour, then go up to Aunt Gloria's and stop in for a minute, then go across the bridge on the Dudleyville road to Aunt Ruth's and Uncle Henry's. They try to get us to have lunch with them but we tell them we already ate down at Gramp's. Only one of the girls is home -- little Hilda. Evelyn is a sophomore in Amherst High School, Lillian and Eunice are in grammar school, and only Hilda home with her baby brother Elmer. The two of them peek around the corner of the kitchen table at us boys.

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I remember almost nothing that happend on Wednesday except we had a meeting around the diningroom table, where Melvin brought up what we thought ought to happen to the house. None of us wanted to live there. He said the problem was Clayton and Larry, what would become of them? Clayt said he would take care of himself, and I said I would take Larry to Middlebury with me. We got word from Mrs. Severance across the road from Charlie Lynch's that she wanted all us boys to come for supper Thursday afternoon after we got back from the funeral. We decided Mel and Clayt would drive Larry and me to Middlebury right

after supper at Mrs. Severance's. I helped Larry get things together. Mel said he and Clayt would move most of our things into the long, low attic between the upstairs bedrooms and the barn loft and padlock the door. He would try to rent the house furnished.

Off and on all day I was worrying over in my mind what must have happened Monday morning. I couldn't rid my mind of something Aunt Ruth told us yesterday. So much was coming at me I packed away without paying attention, but now it kept coming to nag me. Aunt Ruth said Aunt Gloria came up in the evening. It was unlike her because she was a stay-at-home who never visited neighbors, even her relatives living just up the Dudleyville Road. But she had something on her mind she had to get clear of. She told Aunt Ruth and Uncle Henry, "Mertie was almost crazy because she had been unkind to Harry before he went to work that morning."

I have been thinking of my self and here I hear my mother spoken of by her first name. She is not just "Mom," she is a person. It is a wrench for me to shift from "Mom" to "Mertie." As if somebody who calls me "son" suddenly calls me "Lyle." But I haven't got it right because Mom always called me "Lyle," though I never thought of her as "Mertie." Now I have to think what it must be like for "Mertie" to blame herself for being unkind to "Harry". They are not just my father and mother. All the time I

knew them they were people in their own right. What did she mean by "unkind"? Was it like one of those Sunday afternoons I would be reading in the dining room and the folks would be squabbling, and I would come to and find the room quiet and the door to their bedroom closed? Then Mom would come out and get supper walking on air.

I know close to nothing about what it had been like the four years I was at Middlebury. I supposed it must have been easier on them with two less mouths to feed. But I never really considered what it must have been for Pop when he took over as foreman, still keeping the stockroom books as he had been keeping them for his boss, but now he is in charge and coming to realize he would not get anywhere near the pay his boss got -- for supposedly doing the same work. Pop didn't change his clothes and try to dress as his boss had -- as if he belonged in the front office. He worked along with his men, continuing to keep the books but piling right into the manual work, too, as he had been doing before. Did he believe Avison in the Front Office would be grateful and eventually reward him for doing all that work while he was being paid half what his boss got? Did anybody ever give him a word of thanks for it?

His boss, Mr. Woodworth, used to come to the house sometimes, as if to look in on the houseful of boys. He apparently didn't have children. I never knew if he was

married. He would drop by in early evening to talk with "Harry." Often he brought some Millers Falls tool, perhaps an augur bit, or a plane, or a set of wrenches. He would give them to Pop without a word, as if he had a perfect right to. Pop, after he became foreman, never brought tools home and laid claim to them. He sometimes brought a burlap bagful of scrap kindling from screwdriver handles he had picked up from somewhere in the shop, where the scraps would have gone on the trash heap but could be used for kindling at home.

Before Pop was foreman, Mr. Woodworth encouraged him to bring home scrapwood, implying he understood the struggle it must have been to keep body and soul together with a wife and four boys on those wages. And then when his boss retired and Pop got raised in rank, a real raise in pay didn't materialize, only a trifle compared to what Mr. Woodworth had been getting.

From what Aunt Gloria told Aunt Ruth, I imagine Monday morning Mom may have asked Pop to bring something home for the table, and he was already out of cash and complained, "I don't know where the money's coming from," and she lit into him. Only now for the first time in my life I was considering how it wasn't Mom doing the complaining, it was "Mertie." They were "Mertie" and "Harry." And I wondered if Pop maybe on that Friday had got wind he was going to be called to the front office. All weekend, had he been

holding this worry and was it already too much for him? Had she said something like "You've wasted your life in the factory. What is going to become of us and the boys!"

There's something more I've got tucked away, and I never do bring it into the open. What had Mel meant when he told me over the phone that Pop was fired -- not only for stealing scrap --that every factory hand considered his right to -- but Mel said Pop was fired for stealing gas for the car. How could he have done that? There was a storage tank at the end of the loading platform where drivers for the plant filled their truck tanks and made out a requisition for Pop to file in his records. Had Avison accused Pop of stealing for the Ford and keeping no record of it? Was that what Melvin protected us from knowing when he went in alone to see Avison?

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There are cars parked everywhere and knots of people gathered around the schoolhouse at the bottom of the hill. They hush their voices and make way for us while they watch us slow down and stop. Uncle Perry is there beside the schoolhouse and says there is room reserved for us up at the church all the way around on the driveway behind the hearse. At the top of the hill Mr. McCarthy, the undertaker from Greenfield, is stationed in his black suit, starched shirt and black tie and motions us to drive on the shoulder of the road past other cars way around to the

first place in back of the hearse just short of the front door. People are standing on both sides of the steps going in. They hush their voices. They watch us get out, and stand back to let us pass. I catch sight of Uncle Henry and Aunt Ruth and the Towne girls, and Aunt Gloria and Uncle Henry and Clifford and Myrtle, and Uncle Maurice and Aunt Pluma and their family; and Aunt Helen has got there ahead of Uncle Perry. Mr. McCarthy ushers us four boys in to the front row and steers us to the right side facing the two caskets mounted on folding crosslegged pedestals. In our row Grampa and Gramma Glazier and Gramma Briggs and Uncle Forrest and Aunt Iona are sitting in the first seats and we squeeze past to four end seats facing the coffins. The lids are closed and covered with flowers. The front of the church is banked with flowers. I can hardly look at them, but the rank fragrance of roses overpowers the stink from mouldy cushions. We boys are lined up in the front row, Melvin first next to Uncle Forrest, I next, then Clayton, then Larry. I am so pumped full of feeling I can hardly breathe. I would like to rip off the cover of the casket and see my mother. I can't believe she is really in there. I don't listen to the pump organ music, nor to the opening prayer. When we stand up to sing ROCK OF AGES, I don't sing the bass, and Melvin doesn't sing tenor. The other minister, not Mr. Truesdale, gives another long prayer, asking God to make it all clear

to us, and ending how "He works in mysterious ways His wonders to perform." I don't believe for a second God had anything to do with it. I feel like standing up and turning around yelling to ask if Avison is there or anybody from the front office of the Tool Factory. All through the prayer my mind is full of that. I would like to ask them to explain in public what happened Monday morning. I would like to tell them off how much Pop was underpaid all these years, before and after his boss retired. I would like to ask them to explain what they meant by accusing Pop of stealing scrapwood and gasoline for the car. I don't do it.

The second hymn is my favorite, "He who watches the flight of the songbird o'er mountain and desert and wild, He who watches the flight of the Songbird will care for the soul of his child." I don't sing. I don't believe Anybody up there in Heaven was watching Mom and taking care of her soul when she walked out into the river. I am running over in my mind things I had been told, how Clayt told me Warren Billings was driving that cow up the ferry road just down from our house toward the CV train trestle and met Mom hurrying along, so concentrated she didn't answer when Warren spoke to her. It was the last time anybody saw her alive. Warren didn't know people were looking for her. It took some time for them to go down the ferry road and look for her in the River. She must've just walked out in the

shallows at the landing till the current carried her away. They followed along in a rowboat where the current turns in to bend east along the shoreline south and with grappling hooks snarled hold of her skirt snagged in roots of the rotting oak on the promontory where we used to sit fishing looking out over to Gill. Mom always sat way up on the bankside above us. If we caught a good one, we would carry it up to show her and put it in the creel at her feet.

After the second hymn, Mr. Truesdale gave the funeral sermon. He knew Pop and Mom from the time they were young people coming to his church. He spoke of Harry's sweet tenor and Mertie's lovely but shy soprano. He spoke of Harry's excelling as a scholar in Montague High School, and his prowess as an athlete, especially in baseball, and the excellent character of both Mertie and Harry and their loving care over their family of four boys. When everybody turned heads to look where we were sitting, I shrivelled inside. The main part of the sermon was on God's forgiveness and the loving care of Jesus and how if we believe in Him there will come a day of rejoicing when all sorrow will dissolve in the resurrection at the feet of our Savior, when he welcomes the quick and the dead.

The last hymn is "Shall we gather at the River." In back of us, people all over the church are sobbing loud enough for us to hear. Melvin has been sitting doubled over puunding his head like a jackhammer against his

doubled-up fists. I am stiff as a ramrod. None of us boys is crying. Mr. McCarthy's helpers come with two trolleys to wheel the caskets away, and Mr. McCarthy himself leads us to be first in line behind the caskets. People are reaching out to touch us and murmur. In the vestibule Prexy and Mrs. Moody are standing. Prexy leans to say something to Melvin, and Mrs. Moody whispers to me that when they drove past the little library in Northfield Farms, she thought of my Saxonian article "The Book Lady." I am surprised to see them.

Our Model A has been moved out of the way. We ride in the limousine behind the hearse down the hill and take the right fork to the new cemetery at the top of the hill above Gramp's. At the open grave, we boys are lined up while the bearers lower the caskets one after the other into the freshly turned grave. Mr. Truesdale takes a chunk of sod and sprinkles half on one casket and half on the other. He says, "Ashes to ashes, and dust to dust," and talks again about the glorious resurrection.

The limousine carries us down to Gramp's where somebody has driven our car. We don't go inside the house. When Aunt Maud asks what is going to happen to Lawrence, I speak up quick and say, "He's going to come back to Middlebury to live with me." She looks surprised but doesn't say anything. Mrs Severance stops by to remind us boys we are all invited to her house for supper.

Back home at the Farms, we stop at the house for Larry to pick up his boxes. We go for supper to Mrs. Severance's in her small house just down across the road from where Gramma Lynch used to live. It is a very good supper. I don't know about the others, but I hardly notice what I am eating. We thank Mrs. Severance. We tell her Melvin and Clayton are going to drive us to Middlebury, and then come right back to the Farms that same night.

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It is almost nine o'clock when we get to the Community House. Mel and Clayt carry Larry's things to the room upstairs at the back, and then go down to start back for Northfield Farms. Larry and I watch their taillight disappear uphill around the corner and turn right towards Rutland above the Inn. We go back upstairs and I show Larry the fireplace and my canopied bed, and we unpack his suitcase, and put his jacket in the closet and his shirts in the bottom drawer of the bureau. Then I show him around the house, and end up in Miss Steele's office, where I have to make a couple of phone calls.

I call Ma Hagar first and tell her I am back.

"Who did you say?"

"It's Lyle."

"Lyle! Where are you calling from?"

"I am back in Miss Steele's office here in Middlebury. My brother Lawrence is with me. He has come back to live with me."

I can hear her clearing her throat.

"I had a phone call from President Moody after the funeral. He told me about your mother. How old is Lawrence?"

"Thirteen. He's a freshman in high school. Tomorrow I'll take him to school. He's got his report card from the first marking period in Northfield High School."

"If you will put off until ten o'clock, I'll call the Principal's office. She is a good friend of mine."

"Oh, thank you."

"Would you two of you like to come stay here tonight? Nobody is staying in my front room you used to have."

"We are pretty tired. We have to go to the Sergeant House tomorrow morning to see if Larry can board there with me."

"Have you talked with Miss Steele?"

"Not yet. I better call her now and see if we can move the cot up from the utility room and put it in my room for Larry."

"You bring him over to see me. Be sure to come see me as soon as you can. Thank you for calling."

"Goodnight, Ma Hagar."

"Good night, Lyle. Bring Larry over to see Crackers tomorrow."

"I will."

I am proud to show Larry I have such a good friend. I tell him. "That was Ma Hagar, where I stayed last summer to keep her company, She wants to meet you. She has a little female terrier dog called Crackers. She is as old as Gramma Glazier or older. I have to call Miss Steele now. I want to see if it's all right to bring up the cot bed from downstairs and put it in my room for you. She told me to call her collect from Northfield and let her know how things are going, but I never did."

I look at my watch. It's nine-thirty. I tell Miss Steele I'm calling from her office. She can't believe it.

"I have been expecting to hear from you from Northfield."

"There was no time to call. When I got home I learned that my mother is dead, too. I have my thirteen-year-old brother Larry here with me. He has come to live with me. I want to know if it's all right for us to move the cot bed from the utility room upstairs into my room."

There is a long pause, then she says, "It is all right for tonight, Lyle. Tomorrow I will get in touch with Mrs. Swift about your brother's coming to share your room."

"He is thirteen. I have to go to the high school to get him transferred. We will come in to see you first thing tomorrow morning."

She says, "Uncle and I will be there as usual at ten o'clock. I will put you first thing on my calendar."

I am very tired. I say, "Thank you, Miss Steele."

She says, "Goodnight, Lyle."

I say, "Goodnight, Miss Steele."

Book II.02 WICKED...and Spotless as the Lamb

Chapter Two

-1-

After we bring a cot upstairs from the store room and make it up with sheets and pillow and blankets brought from home, and Larry has stowed his clothes in the closet and his suitcase under the cot, we both put on pajamas, brush our teeth and get into bed. I am in my four poster and Larry in his cot along the west wall, feet toward me and head in the corner next the fireplace.. After he puts out his light, I ask, "Would you like me to read to you?"

"Yes."

I begin to read Winnie the Pooh, taking care to say ther, as Christopher Robin thinks the name and gives his pronunciation to Pooh.

I read only the first chapter, then put the book on the shelf of my bedside stand.

"Have you read it before?"

"No."

"Do you like it?"

"Yes, I do. I like Pooh and Christopher. Pooh has a mind of his own."

"Would you rather next time I read something else?"

"I want to hear more about Christopher Robin and Winnie ther Pooh."

"Do you want to say your prayers."

"I have stopped saying prayers."

Our prayers always began "Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray the Lord my soul to keep,
If I should die before I wake,
I pray the Lord my soul to
take...

God bless Poppa and Momma..."

I think I know what he means.

I switched off my bedside lamp and lay in the dark thinking what it must be like to be thirteen years old and hardly ever away from home, then to move from Northfield Farms to Middlebury and sleep in this room in this treasure house filled with antique furniture, and with an older brother he has hardly seen in four years, and who begins their first night together reading from Winnie ther Pooh. I think he is like me at thirteen when I was a freshman in high school, looking like nine. And I warn myself that although I looked and felt dwarfed by the move from the Number Four Schoolhoue to high school, my classmates elected me president of my class and I must be careful not to treat Larry as a child.

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The next morning, Larry's first day in Middlebury High, I saw to it he was up early and made his bed when I made mine and brushed his teeth, and then I made sure he had his tie straight and wore a clean shirt and put on his suitcoat and outside

jacket. We go out into the cool October morning and walk up past the Inn and along Rutland Street the halfblock to the Sergeant House, where I introduce him to Serge and Miss Sergeant and take him into the kitchen to meet Old Lady Sergeant, the cook.

She takes a long look at him, turns her back, opens the oven, and takes out a tray of crosslegged fritters.

"I made them fresh for your breakfast."

We made arrangements for him to be expected every morning with plenty of time for a hot breakfast before going to school, and he will be coming with me at night for dinner .

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We've been living together a week now. It's the second Thursday night Larry is with me. Lance Hammond called Miss Steele and left word he will come to take us for dinner tonight at his boarding house. We watch for him from the drawingroom window. When we go down the sidewalk to the car, he leans across and opens the door on our side. We get in, Larry in the middle. I am carrying the front side curtain that fell out at home when I got out of Lance's car.

"Lyle, I can't believe you went to all that trouble!"

"It wasn't any trouble. We found it beside the stairs leading up from the road to the lawn. I haven't had a chance to thank you for driving me home."

"It was nothing. --And this is Lawrence. --Do you know your big brother is quite something? After his oral exam last

June, Prexy Moody said he wished he knew English literature half as well as your brother. The whole department was there for the exam.

"I want you to have dinner and a movie every Thursday night with me."

No faculty member has shown me this kind of attention, practically inviting the two of us into his family. I am in awe of Lance and his Yale manners. It's a cold evening, and he is wearing his coonskin coat. I have never known anybody like him - except, perhaps Harry Owen, and Harry is older. Lance has been teaching two years and seems ever so much wiser than I am. His father, he told me on that long midnight ride in the rain, is Director of Music at Smith and Mount Holyoke. That puts him, like Harry and the Moodys, in a world I can hardly imagine.

On the drive to the campus he tells us he's taking us to dinner at Rose Martin's house next door to Music House.

"You may have noticed the low building sheltered by trees."

I say, "The first house in, on the road to the Chateau."

Lance laughs. "Last June I asked one of my coeds to smuggle me upstairs in the Chat to take a shower. I wanted to see if I could break the taboo against men being allowed above the first floor. During the dark of the moon, we arranged for me to sneak around to the back and she was there waiting for me and unlatched a ground floor window. When I crawled in, she latched the window again and smuggled me upstairs for my shower. Then we went down and I crawled out the same window."

Although I was nerved up, it was easy having dinner with Lance because everybody was trying to make us feel at home without making any mention why we were there. Particularly, Rose Martin was nice to us. She was a plump, rosy motherly woman with floury hands, who smelt of fresh biscuits.

Larry had no trouble with his napkin or silver. He was very quiet and observant. I was proud of him.

We were late for the movie and had to sit in the balcony, Larry between Lance and me. Afterwards I expected Lance would leave us to walk the short block to the Community House, but he insisted on our making an evening of it and going to Hepburn. We met his roommate, a boy for some reason there from Yale, who said "Hello, how are you?" and disappeared into his bedroom and shut the door. Soon after, a student came in speaking German, and he and Lance vanished into the other bedroom for Lance to prepare for his German examination at Yale. Larry and I poked around and settled down to read magazines piled on a table beside the couch. It was the first time I was ever upstairs at Hepburn. In fact, in four years at Middlebury, although I waited on table in the Commons as a freshman and was kitchen boy in the basement my last two years, I had never before been upstairs or in any dormitory except Painter. And I hadn't either ever been in the Deke House or any of the big houses on campus -- the D. U. or Chi Psi or the K.D.R. And I hadn't been invited to a formal dance by a sorority member or to any of the big fraternity formals, only to Beta Kappa.

After his lesson, Lance drove us back home and said he would pick us up the same time next Thursday.

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I never had any trouble with Larry, except getting him to go to the Sergeant House for a hot breakfast. Although I had juice, toast and cold cereal at the Community House, he was supposed to have a more nourishing meal. One morning, from the upstairs window over the front door watching him go through the trees up toward the Inn and Rutland Street, I saw him veer instead around the far edge of the park down along the sidewalk hugging shopfronts toward the intersection with Main Street. Having got wind of his intention, I met him there and walked him to the Sergeant House and stood on the sidewalk until the front door closed behind him. But I never kept tabs on him that way again.

At night we went for dinner together to the Sergeant House. Sometimes we would be the only guests in the diningroom. Other times there would be traveling salesmen.

One night a salesman asks the waitress, "When is the next train out bound from this station?"

I whisper to Larry, "Mister, trains don't bound out of this station." The waitress was a country girl. When she heard us laughing, she started blushing and came over to ask if she said something wrong, and I tell her, "No. We had a private joke. It had nothing to do with you."

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I need a new overcoat, had saved for it all summer. Instead of buying a stylish one at the Men's shop as I planned to, I decide to have a coat of mourning. It's not something I discuss inside my mind. I simply turn away from the Men's shop, cross the street and have myself measured by the tailor who made bellhop uniforms for the Inn. I want a black coat, heavy enough to stand up against Vermont winters. It turns out an old man's coat, not at all dressy but stiff and substantial. You could have set it in a corner and it would have kept its shape like a dressmaker's dummy. It had a black silk lining, and some sort of coarse-weave filling between lining and a woolen fabric so stiff I had to push with my fingers to get buttons through buttonholes. When I put it on, the flaps at the bottom batted my knees.

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Before I went home for the funeral, I had been planning to take the little blonde girl in Harry Owen's class to Saturday night dances at the Gym. My new coat used up so much money I didn't have anything left for dancing.

I don't know whether Harry ever explained to the class the reason I was absent from collecting compositions that Wednesday after the folks died. I picked up their papers after class that Friday afternoon. Emma Lou was waiting outside when I came down the steps of Chemistry with the bundle in my hands. She fell in step with me and I walked her back to her dorm on South Main

Street. I invited her to Professor Hathaway's first student piano recital of the year.

It was a cold night when Larry and I stopped by for her. The new overcoat was flapping my knees. I felt as awkward as Ichabod Crane. As we walked along together, I was trying to talk learnedly about literature and music. She was looking at me quizzically, letting me go on at a streak. With three on the sidewalk, Larry kept falling a little in back of us, hopping into the gutter, having a hard time keeping up. We were late arriving, and when we went from the vestibule into the crowded music room, I raised my voice to Professor Hathaway, introducing Emma Lou and my brother and reminding Mr. Hathaway of last year's concert when I played To a Wild Rose.

"What genius will you show us tonight?"

I was trying to imitate the hearty savoir faire of Lance Hammond or Harry Owen. It was time for the recital to begin. Everybody turned to look. We had a hard time finding three seats together at the back, and after I helped Emma Lou out of her jacket, I had a time stowing my cumbersome coat. Professor Hathaway was already beginning his introduction when I realized my voice was drowning his out. Emma Lou gave me a look that hushed me, and I could feel my face and especially my ears turning red.

Featured in the program was a young high school graduate from Rutland still living at home and commuting by train I'd met at last year's recital. As he began to play some Chopin

Etudes, I was ashamed of my noisy entrance. I couldn't put my mind on listening to him play.

After last year's recital, he had enthusiastically congratulated me on my playing To a Wild Rose. He said I'd played "with feeling." Early in the fall this year in mid-September, when I was going toward Music House to practice after a Milton class with Dick Brown, I met him coming from his lesson, and he told me he came up once a week by train. He had been accepted for New England Conservatory next year.

I had been thinking about him a lot. I found him attractive and wondered if there was a way to get him to come to the Community House to play on the piano in the drawingroom. I took a chance and asked if he would ever have time to stay over for dinner to play for me. To my surprise he said he would love to. Instead of taking the afternoon train back home, he would go home on the eleven-thirty. He would tell his mother. He was sure she would agree. So I invited him for the very next week.

This was a couple of weeks before the folks died. The day after I invited Benjamin Webster, Jim Duff moved into the center bedroom next to mine. This put a crimp in my plans to have Ben to myself. I thought we could have a cosy dinner and then perhaps we could take turns playing for each other. And -- this hardly entered the front of my mind -- I had a sneaking agenda that sometime along in the evening there would be a chance to invite him up to my handsome bedroom at the back of the house.

I would have a fire laid in the fireplace and we could have an intimate conversation.

Now this plan seemed spoiled. Jim started getting his meals in the kitchen. I felt I would have to include him. However, it turned out that he was driving Mrs. Swift somewhere that night so I wouldn't have to invite him for dinner.

Everything seemed to go well. For dinner I looked up a recipe in one of the Community House cookbooks, and prepared stuffed pork chops, baked potatoes, a tossed salad, and for dessert baked apples. Ben was late. He was filled with admiration for the Community House. After he stashed his music on the rack of the elaborate upright piano, I took him upstairs to hang his coat in my closet. He was impressed by the fireplace and canopied bed and looked over books in my bookcase. I began to think he might come again. Perhaps I would get up courage to suggest that he ask his mother for permission to stay overnight.

By the time we got back downstairs, the chops were overdone, but he didn't seem to notice. He insisted on helping me with washing dishes and putting them away. Then we went into the drawingroom and he started playing for me. I had planned on playing my old pieces I learned from Miss Lincoln. I wouldn't play To a Wild Rose because I didn't want him to think that was the only piece I knew. He was much more proficient than I, and I began to wonder if I really ought to play for him at all.

I heard Jim Duff come in the back door and go upstairs to his room. In a few minutes he came down. Ben stopped playing

and I introduced them. Jim told him not to stop playing. The intimacy of our relationship was spoiled. I had the feeling he began to play for Jim more than for me. After a few minutes, Jim went to sit on the bench beside him. When Ben finished the first piece, Jim praised him and asked him to play another. He played a moody piece by Debussy and a fiery one by Ravel.

Then Jim asked if he had noticed that this was a player piano. Ben was immediately entranced. He opened the sliding panels above the keyboard and exposed the spools on which the music scrolls would be mounted. He exclaimed over buttons for controlling volume and speed and wanted to try it out.

Jim went to the cupboard and came back with rolls of music, labelled Stravinsky, Ravel, Beethoven, Chopin, and Bach. Ben discovered that the rolls were made by master pianists, some who had themselves listened to Ravel and Chopin. He said, "You could study the notations and learn to play the music just as they played it."

He and Jim put a Ravel piece on the rolls and Ben began to experiment with controls -- playing the music faster or slower, louder or softer as the notations directed. Their heads were together over the music. I felt altogether out of it. They were bending over the instrument. Finally I got up and went upstairs. I could hear them down there in the drawingroom, having a great time with their music. I could hear them laughing, talking noisily, interrupting each other. At half past ten I

went back down and they were still at it. At a quarter to eleven, Ben suddenly came to how late it was getting.

He looked at me for the first time in a long time, and said, "Oh, my goodness, it's almost time for my train."

He collected his music into his bookbag, we hurried upstairs for his coat and came down and just made it to the station.

When I came back in, the drawingroom was still lighted and Jim was gone and none of the rolls put away. It took me a half hour to straighten up and rewind the rolls and get them back onto the top shelf in the cupboard. When I went upstairs, Jim's light was out. He had gone to bed and left the housekeeping to me.

This was flashing through my mind as Emma Lou and Larry and I were listening to the recital. The rest of the evening I was subdued. When we went back outside, the cold wind had blown itself out and we were in one of those balmy Vermont Indian Summer evenings. As we dawdled under the trees of lower campus and along South Main to Emma Lou's dormitory, I left my coat unbuttoned, flapping in the warm air. Larry drew back leaving us alone for our goodnight. When I embraced Emma Lou, she reached under both flaps of my greatcoat and, standing tiptoe, pulled herself against me, her pelvis snug against mine. Maybe it was because Larry was there deliberately looking away from us, anyway I felt no response. She whispered, "You don't have to pretend to be somebody you aren't. You aren't like that,

Lyle. All the kids in the class admire you." I pulled myself away and we said a quick goodnight.

-7-

My two graduate courses are going all right. Now I have Larry living with me I don't have the same exclusive concentration on my studies. I enjoy the work but some of the edge is off. Doc Cook's class in American Short Story includes short novels. Doc has us read several of them -- Faulkner's As I Lay Dying, Erskine Caldwell's God's little Acre, and Hemingway's A Farewell To Arms. Except for Hemingway, I find them hard going. It isn't that I don't admire Faulkner but I don't understand him. I think Doc, like me, has a way of liking best the book he has just read. I am so puzzled by Faulkner that I can hardly make anything out of him. I think I have found a clue to The Sound and the Fury when I read in a review that "It's the story of a decadent southern family seen through the eyes of an idiot." That helps with the first part, but then I come to Part II, seen through the eyes of Quentin Compson, a Harvard student, who commits suicide at the end of his narrative. Quentin is hypersensitive, the opposite of an idiot. And Part III begins with the story of his brother, who is obsessed with love of money but is hardly an idiot, unless you are thinking politically in terms of what is good for society. I give up reading before getting very far in that part. I never get to Part IV.

I like Hemingway's Nick Adams stories, a whole group that if you put them together they are like reading a novel. These stories are easier to read than Faulkner. There's a poetic rhythm that pulls me along, where Faulkner's rhythm is dominated by shock. Not that there aren't plenty of shocks to be found in Hemingway, but Nick Adams himself seems gentle and kind, and I like him so much. I feel close to him. Doc talks about "the tough, masculine drive of Hemingway," but it seems to me Hemingway is covering up his natural shyness with all that talk about toughness. Frederic Henry is essentially sensitive and loving. The war tries to make him tough. Nothing could be more feminine than his reaction to the news that Catherine has died. I think maybe I like Hemingway the best of all these authors. I would like to meet him and talk to him, but what the critics say about his toughness makes me afraid he wouldn't like me.

The novelist Doc Cook likes at the moment is Erskine Caldwell. He tells us to read "God's Little Acre." He says to watch this author, because he has the making of the Great American Novelist. He has said pretty much the same thing about Faulkner and Hemingway. One day he talks at great length about brutality in Faulkner's Sanctuary. He tells us Faulkner deliberately set out to write a shocker in order to make a name for himself. I read God's Little Acre and wonder if it isn't the same kind of pot boiler, written to catch the public eye. I hardly think it's a great novel. There's such a pile up of no account characters. There's not a one I really sympathize with.

In Dick Brown's class we have begun reading Paradise Lost. Dick Brown reads the first pages aloud. What strikes me is the way the sentence keeps going. The religion of it doesn't appeal to me. I can empathize with it dramatically but am I supposed to be personally impressed with the word "Disobedience" as if loss of innocence would be a great tragedy except it opens the way for the human being to strive for his own redemption: "and the Fruit"? I like the poetry of it, but it has been a long time since I've been impressed with that kind of negative/positivism. From what I already know of the poem, is it possible to say it's a great poem, a great dramatic struggle filled with human weakness and courage, yet the supernatural core is hogwash? I'm not ready to say this in class. I don't know how Charlie and Jane and Dick Brown feel about it. My scepticism doesn't diminish my admiration for Milton and his great poem.

One evening Larry and I are leaving for dinner, Jim Duff is eating at the aluminum table in the kitchen. Larry has slipped ahead of me into the drawing room. Jim catches my eye and sits there above his full plate, fork handle gripped between thumb and index finger. Tipping his head toward his plate, breaking our eye-lock, without visibly moving his hand he applies pressure, making the forktip tremble. Motioning to his groin, he makes the tip tremble again. "Veal does it every

time." Aware of the pressure in my groin, I hurry to catch up with Larry in the drawing room.

At lunch one day Jim and I are having our sandwich together, when he starts gossiping about the carrying on of rich people. "I have seen a couple sitting at dinner, and the wife so hard up for her husband, when she thinks he has an erection, she throws herself flat on the floor under the table."

Another time, I am mopping the floor in the west room, when Jim calls to me from the north end of it. He points up on the wall to a portrait of Joseph Battell, Mrs. Swift's Uncle. Somehow the picture has slipped off balance on its cord. Jim is standing under it. When I put the mop in the pail and start for the storage closet, Jim calls, "Where are you going?"

"To get the stepladder."

Jim motions me to come. He makes a cradle of his hands in front, and motions me to climb on. Facing him, I place my right foot on his hands and he swings me up around where I am high enough to straighten the picture. Instead of letting me down he keeps me balanced up there, tottering, both hands buried in his hair. His face is buried in my groin. We hold the pose only a second. With a push of my hands I jump free and stand back deciding that the painting is straight enough to satisfy Caroline Steele. The whole event has taken a couple of minutes. I go back to mopping.

Every Thursday night Larry and I continue to have dinner and a movie with Lance Hammond. Coming back late, we usually go straight up the front stairs and back to our bedroom. One Friday morning I am dustmopping the downstairs meeting room, when Miss Steele and Uncle arrive. Without paying close attention, I hear them in the front hall and soon hear their voices trailing up-stairs. In a few minutes she comes and summons me to her office where Uncle is sitting watching above his spread newspaper.

"Young man, I would like to know what you have been up to!"

I have no idea what she refers to.

"Speak up!"

"I don't know what you are after."

"I mean that mess down in the drawing room. What were you up to last night?"

"Larry and I went to dinner and a movie with Lance Hammond."

"Then how do you account for such a mess?"

I am wracking my brains. "I dusted and vacuumed the drawing room yesterday. It was all right when I left it."

"Well, it isn't all right now. Follow me and I'll show you."

She leads the way downstairs, Uncle and I following.

"Now what do you think of that?"

In the middle of the floor a card table is set up and two straight chairs drawn to it, and on it an overflowing ashtray.

"It's the first time I've been in this room this morning."

I set to work emptying the ash tray, then put the chairs in their places against the wall and get out the vacuum cleaner.

Miss Steele stands watching, "I can tell you I intend to get to the bottom of this."

She turns back upstairs, Uncle in her wake.

I never hear another word about it. If Jim had anything to do with it, nobody ever tells me.

-11-

Emma Lou and I continue to go to events where there is no need to spend money. Larry often goes with us, but if there is something at the high school, then Emma Lou and I have an evening together. She is as bright as I thought her the first time I paid attention to her. She is invariably cheerful, and, in many ways in spite of looking like a child, more socially adult than I am. She is not unduly impressed by my assistantship.

Sometimes I still forget myself and show off in front of her, talking as if I'm older and wiser than she is, showing off my knowledge of English literature. She has a knack of putting me in my place. I begin to think she really likes me. I know I look three or four years younger than I am and take to dramatizing what people might be saying about what a handsome young couple we make.

I intend to invite her to the Beta Kappa spring formal, and, since she has joined a sorority, suppose she will invite me

to hers. One night I am being superior about the artificial network of campus social conventions: "You take the formal dance. We get dolled up and prance around and take ourselves so seriously you would think we are members of the Four Hundred."

"Oh, I didn't realize you think a formal dance frivolous."

"It's really such a charade. We are like kindergartners playing dressup in our parents' throwaways."

"I have been looking forward to my first formal."

I realize she has suddenly gone serious. "Yes, of course. But it's all so artificial!"

Emma Lou changes the subject.

The next time we are alone together she informs me quite casually she has invited one of her classmates to her formal. I go creepy cold, and clam up and hardly speak another civil word that evening.

I let a month go by and don't try to get in touch her. I invite Mary Priscilla to the Beta Kappa formal, where she is a sensation. All the guys think she is wonderful, she is so interested in everybody she dances with. It is her senior year. She has heard about my folks, and encourages me to talk about them. She talks to Larry as if she has known him forever. He thinks she is the best girl he has met at Middlebury.

-12-

Dick Brown assigns us to write a research paper for our last paper in the Milton course. He has skipped from Paradise Lost to Samson Agonistes and from there -- to fill the time when

we are spending on the term paper -- to Milton's prose. Since he skips Paradise Regained, I decide to write my paper on a contrast between the great human tragedy of the long epic and the more abstract political statement of the short one. I pay most attention to the Marriage hymn in Part IV, the temptation and fall in the garden (Part IX) and the expulsion from the garden. I contrast these episodes with the undramatic and forensic argument of the shorter epic.

Dick doesn't give any time to, doesn't even mention, the mechanics of writing scholarly research. I watched Melvin write so many research papers, with a pile of books in front of him, turning from one to another in order to extract a quotation and footnote it, that I have no respect for that method. I have never attempted to use it and assume that it is enough to read in depth and present my quotations from the two epics, unadorned by reference to scholarly backgrounds.

It is only on the day we turn in our papers, when I catch sight of Charlie's and Jane's buttressed with footnotes and bibliography that I have any misgivings about my method. I wait with considerable apprehension for the papers' return, and am disappointed but not surprised to take a quick look at my grade and see that I got B. I leave in a hurry without asking the others what they got. We have a final examination, and although I write furiously and with energy and try to take Brown's advice of the June before to follow Amy Niles's example to corroborate important generalizations with quotations, I get a B in that

also. It is not much comfort later to meet Charlie DuBois on a crosswalk, and have him tell me that he asked Brown for permission to read my paper, and thought it in many ways better than his. Since I got a low B in Cook's short story first semester and didn't have money to take a second semester, I feel that my graduate work is off to an indifferent start, and comfort myself by thinking that I really have no intention of becoming a scholar. Rather, I'm going to become an author and in a few years be making my living writing stories and poetry.

-13-

I run into Mary Priscilla on campus and we fall into our usual deep communion. I ask if she has time that evening to go for a walk. She will be graduating and returning to Ashfield, and I think there will be little chance of seeing her again. We walk out past the athletic field, and by Passion Puddle and steer into the old cemetery and stop by the grave of Gamaliel Painter. There we spread ourselves on the grass and suck grassblades, poking around in search of a four leaf clover, and watching the sun dip under the orange fire of an early June evening. There sweeps over me the aura of early mornings three years past when we used to meet at the crossings of the paths from Painter to Hepburn and from Chapel to the Gym. I wonder if she remembers it, too.

I blurt out, "I know this isn't the time or the place, but I love you, Mary Priscilla, and I've been wondering if you would marry me. I mean not tomorrow but someday."

Her face is drowned in compassion. She lifts her left hand and I see the finger wearing a diamond I have not noticed before. "Andrew is my high school sweetheart. He is a farmer and good one, in business with his older brother. He has loved me a long time, and I love him. We are going to live in the little house my aunt left me. Andrew will come to my graduation and I want you and him to meet. I'll send you an invitation."

I congratulated her. I tried to hide my panic. It was my vanity that hurt. She sensed it.

She said, "It's possible to love two people at the same time. I was in love with you so much it hurt. After a while it burned itself out. Now I love Andrew, but I will always love you, too."

I pretend nothing has changed. She insists on holding hands all the way back to Pearsons.

-14-

I have had enough of Middlebury for a while and think Larry has, too. I wrote to Gramma Glazier and asked if she and Gramp can take the two of us for the summer. A week later we got a letter from Aunt Maud inviting Larry to come spend the summer with them and be company for little Howard and learn the lobstering business with Uncle Howard. Larry liked the idea. The next day I heard from Gram telling me Larry will have a letter from Aunt Maud inviting him to visit them, and she and

Gramp would like to have me come stay with them as long as I want to.

We plan to leave the day after the last day of school for Lawrence. Melvin will come for us and carry us to Gramp's, where Uncle Howard and Aunt Maud and Howard will be waiting to carry Larry home with them. Melvin is coming to Middlebury anyway because Margaret Moody is going to get married right after graduation, and Prexy has invited Melvin to chaffeur important guests just the way last year he acted as chauffeur for Prexy at the Summer Conference in East Northfield. It will be a big society wedding with people from all over. Although I haven't any money to speak of, I spend some of it on a small pewter cream pitcher and Larry and I carry it in early evening to the house on South Street. Margaret and her bridegroom come out and sit on the steps leading to the garage where she undoes the outside gift-wrappings and the tissue paper and reveals the burnished pitcher shining with subdued glow in tbe sunset.

"Oh, Lyle and Larry, thank you! It is lovely! I love pewter! It will have the place of honor among my presents. You are both invited to my wedding."

In front of her young man she gives me a kiss that carries me back to the morning when I first took a crush on her after she rescued me from the horror of sole responsibility during that freezeup when I dashed in to find water pouring from upstairs over the portrait of Dwight L. Moody.

It is an outdoor Sunday wedding on the lawn in front of the Chateau. I dress up in my white flannels and powder blue jacket and imagine myself worthy of the occasion. Larry is in his best suit. We go to the house on South Street to look at the tables loaded with presents and don't find the pewter pitcher and don't like to ask for it. In the afternoon of Monday, Melvin has finished ferrying guests to the station, and Larry has got his report card.

In early June, John Israel Smith asked to be recommended for my place, and I arranged for him to meet Caroline Steele, who took to him immediately. Then he decided to stay on for another year with Theodora Crane, the assistant librarian, in her gothic house on South Street.

Fortunately I get a letter from Rollin Campbell in New Haven, saying he still hasn't got a job and asking if there is any chance he could have the custodian job next year. Miss Steele tells me to have him get in touch with her. I am relieved to have something nearly settled because I don't want to let Miss Steele down after having practically assured her John Israel will come if she wants him.

BOOK II.03WICKED...and Spotless as the Lamb

Chapter Three

-1-

Larry has gone to Aunt Maud's just across the bridge in New Hampshire from Massachusetts, where Uncle Howard has a lobster boat and a restaurant on Route I leading to Maine. I am out to Gramp's helping with haying, sleeping again in the little chamber off the kitchen, from where, waking at night, I can still listen to spring water piped from the top of the sandbank to the greenpainted hogshead next to the sink. Waking at night, I turn over and go back to sleep secure in the presence of Gramp and Gram in the big northwest bedroom.

I have applied for the job as English teacher at Northfield High School. Evenings I sit under the hanging lamp at the table after Gram and Gramp have gone to bed. I am going to be a writer. In longhand I scratch out beginnings of poems and first paragraphs of stories that don't get anywhere. Aunt Helen has persuaded me to teach the oldest class in Sunday school, and I work on the New Testament story of Jesus. Every Sunday I assign a passage from the Gospels and go to talk about Jesus not as the Son of God but boy and then young man not so much older than we are. In the class are the older Towne girls and Clifford Blinn and some Weatherbee boys and girls, whose mother and Aunt Helen run the school in the morning and in the evening take turns

glazier

presiding over meetings where the preacher is the pastor of Leverett Center Church or some visiting evangelist like Mr. Anderson, who still lives in Greenfield near a rich woman he "saved" years ago. She is supporting him and is thinking of hiring some young fellow to be his assistant. With a recommendation from Aunt Helen and Mrs. Weatherbee, I am invited for an interview, but nothing comes of it, and I wasn't all that interested in the first place.

By surprise I got a letter from St. Paul, Minnesota, from National Headquarters of Beta Kappa inviting me to apply for traveling Secretary, visiting chapters all over the United States. I was recommended on the strength of my work as chapter Historian at Middlebury. I didn't know what to think of the proposal. I never thought of myself as a loyal fraternity man but it is my only specific job opportunity. I wrote to Dick Brown for his opinion, and he wrote back such a negative that I declined the invitation to apply.

I write a passionate letter to Mary Priscilla asking her to reconsider her refusal to marry me. She writes back a long letter telling me what she told me before -- how for a year or more she had such a crush on me she thought she couldn't endure it, then it burnt itself out. She concludes, "It is possible to be in love with more than one person at the same time, and I'll never stop loving you but I love Andrew also. We will be married in the fall and live in the little house where we children --Margaret and Richard and I -- used to visit my aunt after

my mother became a widow. When Aunt Alice died, she left her house to me." I try to understand that I'm wounded more in my pride than in my heart, but I doubt if I'll ever forget Mary Priscilla. During July haying season I rake up scatterings with the bullrake, and mow away, building and treading down hay up to the rafters. Dust and fragrance of dried grass brought indoors to age is nearly overpowering. I feel that I have come home, reverting to the boy I once was. After haying is done, when Gramp and Uncle Perry go back to work in the North Leverett sawmill, I spend my days at the kitchen table writing or help Gram. Afternoons I walk over to Rattlesnake Gutter to climb on the cliffs above the Gutter Road. Or I follow a wheelrut for a swim in the bend of the River above where the road curves over a high culvert below the Bourne dam where Sawmill River meanders through woods above the Stratford house before plunging down rapids in the narrow channel under the road. The upper road turns south and becomes the Gutter Road that travels to the summit of Brushy Mountain then tips down the long hill on the south side to Uncle Maurice's on the north edge of Leverett Center. The lower road swings east of the culvert down an incline north then on the level around a curve west by the Stratford House and beyond that past two coal kilns still operated by Ethan Howard. From there the road continues, to join the meadow road coming in from Gramp's then uphill to Lyman Glazier's on the left, and on the right the old Brushy Mountain one-room school moved from its foundation at the foot of Brushy

Mountain to the hilltop where Aunt Helen and Uncle Perry now live with their five children, Betty, Arnold, Ethel, Warren and Lee.

-2-

Jeffrey Belcher, the youngest boy in my Sunday School class, begins to knock on Gramp's door afternoons, and we swim or climb the cliffs together. He lives with his mother in the first house on the right on the Dudleyville road, one of the oldest houses in Moores Corner, across the river from Uncle Henry Blinn's and Aunt Gloria's, and a few rods down from Aunt Ruth's and Uncle Henry Towne's where Gramma Briggs lived when she got married, and where Mom was born and grew up. Mrs. Belcher takes an interest in me and makes it clear she thinks I'm a good influence on her son, a callow, withdrawn boy with eyes that twist away from direct contact as if unwilling to reveal some secret. I am drawn to him but careful not to have any sexual contact because I don't want to get in trouble.

Sometimes Mrs. Belcher takes us on a picnic to their cottage on the southwest side of Locks Pond. Usually we are met there by a man friend of hers. She likes to philosophize to her boyfriend about psychological problems of a modern nature, especially problems with an undertone of free thought. After lunch the boy and I walk along the beach road to the hotel for an ice cream cone, and come back to change in an unfinished bedroom for a swim at the beach east of the cottage. Mrs.

Belcher's friend has smuggled in a bottle of wine, which they have enjoyed while we were gone. We regard them curiously as we pass the table. Mrs. Belcher's voice has grown thick as she ponders more and more sleepily the communion of Love. Her murmur is slow and broken, hardly more than a fuzzy whisper on a mechanical track: "The creative...process of the...universe is a manifestation of...LOVE. The world... is born out of...LOVE. Everything pure and good...comes...out... of...LOVE." Across from her Ed Richards slouches, waiting for the right moment to strike.

We leave them together while we go for our swim. When we come back, the car of her lover is gone.

Jeffrey shows no interest in his mother's pseudo-sophisticated ramblings. He is at least a half dozen years younger than I, although I seem younger than I am. Back at Gramp's after four years at Middlebury, it is as if I have regressed to adolescence. I never talk about college. Jeff is curious about sex but, though there is a kind of courtship between us, we never touch one another. We are circumspectly flirtatious. On top of the cliff one hot afternoon, we decide to improve our tan and peel off our clothes. From far away down the road we hear voices approaching. Without saying a word but realizing how anyone passing on the road instinctively raises eyes to the clifftop, we grab our clothes and conceal ourselves in the brush. From our shelter we watch one of the Bourne girls and a girlfriend trudge up the road toward the summit where the road

tips over on its way to Leverett. As they pass by, sure enough, their faces turn up the cliff to where we are hiding. If we had been asleep on the rocks, our untanned bodies would have been exposed where the girls could not have missed us. When they have passed, we quickly dress and make our way down the rock heap to the road. Though we don't mention it, I'm sure Jeff's mind, like mine, is full of our narrow escape.

Along into August around noon Jeff comes down to Gramp's with an invitation from Mrs. Belcher to go with them to visit relatives in Gardner. There we are entertained by an older woman and a daughter who makes a great to-do over our naturally curly hair: "Wouldn't you know! two boys both curly haired, and I spend hours with the iron!" The ladies are hospitable and insist on our staying for supper. They seem to be old friends or close relatives to the Belchers, and accept me without a question about who or what I am. I sort of am hanging there on the fringe of the unexplained relationship of the mother and daughter to Mrs. Belcher and Jeffrey. I make no effort to impose my identity on them. After a late supper we drive back through the warmth of evening, Jeffrey in the middle between his mother and me. We hardly speak. When we reach Moores Corner it is probably ten-thirty. I am surprised that Mrs. Belcher doesn't continue the quarter mile to Gramp's to take me home but abruptly turns into their driveway.

Switching off the engine, removing the key decisively, she says, "Now, Lyle, it's too late for you to go wake up your

grandparents. You and Jeffrey are three-quarters asleep. I'm going to tuck you both into bed."

For some unfathomable reason I resist. I say, "Gram and Gramp will be expecting me. Gram will be listening for me."

"Nonsense! We are planning on you for breakfast."

I don't argue, but saying goodnight and thank you am off down the road whistling.

-3-

In the mail I have word from Northfield that I have a job offer, but not in the high school. The principal of Northfield Center Graded School has resigned after a long illness, and the Schoolboard and Superintendent have decided that the grammar school is where they want me for what they call the junior high school -- the fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth grades, upstairs. They made me the offer without an interview on the basis of my record in the high school and at Middlebury. Most of the board, including its chair Mrs. Montague have known me for a long time. When I go to confirm the contract and to meet Superintendent Linville W. Robbins, I learn that Sadie Sinclair, who was Principal for years, was very unwell last semester and, they imply, lost control, and they would like a man in her place. When I ask about the other job in high school English, they tell me the position is already filled with an older man, Ralph Taylor from Melrose, married and a father. They offer me \$900 and I don't bargain. While I am there, I ask about possible places to rent and Mrs. Montague tells me of a small apartment

in a wing of the Johnson house on the line between Northfield and East Northfield across from the Trinitarian Church. It turns out to be a furnished livingroom, bedroom, bath at the north end of an ell extending from the main house, and I lease it beginning the first of September.

-4-

It's the middle of August rowen haying season. I'm up early before sunrise and to bed early, muscles aching from trailing the bullrake to take up scatterings in the meadow and from mowing away in the barn. Gramp pitches to Uncle Perry from the hayrack, the wagon backed onto the barn floor. The horse, glad for a rest, turns his head, rips off a mouthful of hay, then swings his head back, munching clover. Uncle Perry perches on the edge of the bottom mow, tossing forkfuls up to the rafters where I am treading loose hay. I am back where I used to be as a boy, except Gramp no longer bawls me out for raking like an old woman. Midafternoon, midweek, we have just mowed away a load and I am near the clothesline on the side lawn leaning on the bullrake ready to follow the wagon to the meadow on the low ground along the river south of the coal kilns. A car comes downhill from the Corner, turns into our driveway, and a young man, a stranger to me, gets out and without seeming to notice me straw-hatted, barefooted, in overalls, cradling the long handle of the rake, goes to the wagon and addresses Gramp and Uncle Perry.

"I wonder if I can borrow your boy this evening. I need help distributing tickets for the 'Romeo and Juliet' my roommate will be performing at the church Friday night. Proceeds will go to Moores Corner Church."

Gramp scratches his head and looks at Uncle Perry. "I guess if you want him Lyle can speak for himself."

The stranger comes over, "What do you say, boy, will you help me sell tickets tonight?"

An hour or so after supper he shows up with his car, and I get a better look at him, dressed in crushed corduroys and a flannel blazer over a striped shirt open at the throat. His face is thin, dark complected with an eagle brow black like his hair. I think he is in his middle thirties, south or central European, not blonde like most of us Glaziers, quite, I think, knowingly handsome. I am glad I took trouble to have gone down to the river and have taken a bath and dressed in my white flannels and short sleeved cotton shirt, with my white Middlebury M sweater over one shoulder in case I need it. I wonder if he will tumble to my being a college graduate. The way he ignored me and talked to Gramp and Uncle Perry as if needing their permission made me feel I were still in high school. His mistake didn't bother me. He seemed pleased by my adolescence.

As we drove toward North Leverett, he told me he and his roommate live in the first house on the right just before you reach the Bourne residence on the side road turning left off

Dudleyville Road a quarter mile above Henry Towne's. He seemed to assume I am an old resident and will know the road and the houses, but I barely know where he lives, though I have often noticed the road cutting back at 190 degrees from the highway.

"My roommate is an actor. We have been coming here for five summers. It will be a monologue from Shakespeare. Harold is very good. He will be in costume to play the part of Romeo, reciting the great soliloquies." Although his drawl is condescending, I'm glad he realizes I'm not a total ignoramus.

Just below North Leverett Church he takes the hillroad turn to the right upgrade and passes the first few houses then stops at a summer place set well back from the road. By the spruceness of the lawn and lack of farm implements, I decide they are summer renters, probably from New York City. There are lights on the wide screened porch. We both get out and go to the door. A man comes immediately. The two of them know each other.

"Hi Bruce, I wonder if you've heard about the performance of Romeo and Juliet Friday evening at Moores Corner Church. Harold is putting on the show to benefit the church."

"Hello, Donnie. I believe Mildred saw a poster."

"Tickets are fifty cents for adults, ten cents for children under twelve."

"Let's have a half dozen adult, and two for the kiddies. You say this Friday? What time?"

"Friday at 8:00."

As we walk to the car, I'm amazed at how easy the transaction was. I had been worried that I might have to make the pitch, but at this rate we should sell a bushel of tickets.

My competent friend cramps the car around in the driveway and drives back down hill, takes the Moores Corner road all the way past Gramp's and the Moores Corner schoolhouse to Locks Pond, not stopping at any of the houses. South of the Inn, just before we reach the lake, he swings right, onto the deep-rutted shore road under evergreens to the camp meeting grove. There he cramps into a lane, drives past the rickety Revival Meeting platform, and parks facing the water. Behind us the sun is setting, throwing orange and red beams into top branches; it's already dark under heavy boughs of hemlock and pine. We are in nighttime darkness while above us it is daylight.

He makes no explanation why we haven't continued selling tickets, but lights a cigaret and offers the pack. When I say I don't smoke, he stows them away in his breast pocket, then reaches over, grasps my hand, and presses it warmly.

"Everybody calls me Donnie. I'm Donatello. And you are Lyle." He gives my hand another squeeze before letting go.

He sits there occasionally flicking the ash over the side through his open window, and looks dreamily into the dusk, and then as if from a great distance begins to talk, musingly.

"I once travelled to India and Nepal and have never forgotten how different the oriental mystics are from anything we know in America. The wisdom of the East is deep. For them

love is not an idle pastime. It is the essence of Life. You can read about it in Sanskrit books making clear that what they call Tantra is not to be read about but to be acted. Sex is the primal force. The world is continually reborn out of the vulva, which they call the yoni, or the female principle. The yoni yearns for the male. A woman is nothing without the seed. The seed from the male continually infuses the yoni with sexual delight. The lotus is a symbol. The outer petals of the lotus symbolize unfolding reality. Without sex the world is nothing, and we are nothing."

He talks softly as if to mesmerize himself. I immediately catch his drift and know why he has brought me into these woods. The magnified light of sun lying over water fades. Twilight and then darkness settle and he talks on, lighting one cigaret after another. Once in a while he turns his face toward me as if to discover if I am paying attention, but it is as if he is trying to cast a spell over me by casting it over himself. I think he believes I'm a slightly educated country greenhorn into whom he is pouring a new outlook on life. I know what he is after. I am not at all impressed by the mystic symbolism of his "yoni" waiting to receive the "lingam". It seems to me only another kind of rationalizing religion, and though I like the idea of sex well enough, I think we ought to be content with what we are, animals with a chance through sex and love to reach our communion. I wish he would stop his palaver and reach over and

take my hand out of my lap and find out what is under my folded sweater.

After a while, he opens his door and walks around front of the car to my side and lingers at the edge of the trees, where I can make out the outline of his corduroy dungarees as he takes a long piss, then continues to slouch there. Instead of joining him, I get out and walk around the back to the other side of the car and relieve myself . When he fails to come over to me, I retrace my journey, zipping my fly as I go, then getting in and closing the door. He tires of his doodling and retraces his way past the hood and gets back in on his side and lights another cigaret. This time he tries a different tack, and tells me he knows a house over in Wendell where there are a couple of women we could visit if I want to. He sometimes goes to them. When I don't show any enthusiasm, he switches to another oriental ploy. It is as if he can't be content with simple country pleasure but must disguise his desire under symbolic incantations from faraway plaees.

He talks about eunuchs who disguise themselves as women in order to give men exquisite pleasure. "In India one of these practitioners will come to your hotel. You can hire him from the desk clerk. When he comes to your room, he will bow and greet you elaborately. He locks the door by pushing the overhead nightstock into its braces. Then he will come to your bed and ease you out of your clothes, leaving you lying there naked while he goes to the bathroom and comes back with a fresh

towel, which he lays across your hips. He will begin kneading your feet, rubbing your muscles deeper and deeper. One by one, he will stretch each toe and make the bones crack. From there he fondles up one leg and then the other. Each time he reaches your groin, he touches your balls and cock lightly. He doesn't linger but continues up your body. After kneading your stomach and chest, he raises one of your arms, then the other, his palms moving out to your fingertips. He will crack the bones of each finger as he cracked each of your toes. Then his palms move to the top of your head, where he will rub your scalp as if massaging your brain, working one lobe then the other. He is most thorough. His hands descend over your face to your nipples and chest where he lingers before dropping his palms to your belly and cock, expertly making you desire more than he gives you. When he has roused your excitement, he will leave you and go to the bathroom and be gone a long time before coming back. He wants you to miss him.

"When he comes back, this time he will remove the towel, and bring you to a pitch of excitement over and beyond what you enjoyed before. When his hand passes over your testicles he will handle them lovingly, then pause above them to slap down your erection, each time pausing over it as he moves up from your feet to your head or from head back to your feet. He will bend his head close as if taking you into his mouth but he won't take you. When you can hardly hold back, he will linger over you, still hardly touching you more than an instant, skirting

around your member, then closing in until he is holding it in his palm, gently squeezing then pumping your foreskin absentmindedly as if his hand is moving of its own will. You are being manipulated by an anonymous presence. He is a professional, knowing exactly how to arouse you, how to prolong your anticipation."

I ask Donnie if he would like to go for a swim in the lake. For some reason he doesn't want to. I wonder if he is afraid somebody in one of the nearby cottages might discover us. I wish he would get over symbolizing and come to the point. Why can't he reach over and grab me? I could touch him, but I don't and he still doesn't touch me -- as if I am taboo unless I give him the magic word or sign.

It gets late. We sit there, it seems, for hours. Nothing happens except his droning shift from one sublimating anecdote to another. Finally, I get out again and walk to the lakefront, but he doesn't follow. When I get back, he has started the engine and we drive back to Moores Corner. He has changed his tune. All the way, he is begging me to go with him to the pool in the river where it wanders through the woods below Bourne's dam. I would be glad to go if he would just drive there to the path into the woods, but for some unfathomable reason I refuse to commit myself verbally. When we get to Bourne's store and the turnoff to Rattlesnake Gutter, he says again, "Say the word and I'll swing onto the Gutter Road," but I say nothing. When we come to Gramp's, he doesn't turn into the driveway. There in

the road, we sit in the car by the mailbox. I can't hear a sound from the northwest bedroom. I wish Donnie would just swing the front wheels, put the car in gear and take the meadow road past the coal kilns to the Gutter Road and go left over to the swimming hole in the woods. Why doesn't he let go of the wheel and reach over and grab me, where I am ready? He doesn't. Finally I get out quick, afraid Gram and Gramp will have heard the car and be wondering why I don't come in. All the way in to the house I am wishing I had gone with him. After undressing, I lie awake in the little chamber wishing we hadn't been so foolish.

I go to the performance Friday evening. There is no sign of Donnie. I suppose he is back of the partition prompting the actor decked out in Renaissance doublet and hose. For the famous daybreak soliloquy, there is a stepladder concealed inside a backless wooden tower with a platform on which Harold stands, drooping in our direction, his voice soft and insinuating:

"It was the lark, the herald of the morn;
No nigtigale. Look, love, what envious streaks
Do lace the severing clouds in yonder East.
Night's candles are burnt out, and jocund day
Stands tiptoe on the misty mountain tops.
I must be gone and live, or stay and die."

I wonder if I could skip around to the back door and go in and find Donnie. I don't. The acting is reasonably persuasive,

but I don't appreciate the performance. It is a city smalltime actor wowing the locals. At the end I can hardly hold back from going around in through the back door to offer my congratulations and see if Donnie is there. I don't do it, but walk home with Aunt Helen and her children.

-5-

The last two weeks of August I have an unpaid job as counselor for a summer religious camp at Locks Pond. Aunt Helen and Mrs. Weatherbee are sponsors, but there will be a young married couple in charge and three college-aged counselors, myself for the fifth and sixth graders, another young man for the older boys, and a young woman for the girls. I am supposed to be there Sunday for supper but Uncle Perry is late driving me, and it's nine o'clock when we get there. I go to the main house where I find Mr. and Mrs. Prince, the young directors, busy getting their small daughter to bed. They are glad to see me but explain that the youngsters have had their supper and campfire and are already settled in bunkhouses. The Princes are polite, but I think they are hiding some annoyance that I didn't get there earlier. I am annoyed at Uncle Perry for making me late.

Mr. Prince takes me to the bunkhouse where the eleven and twelve year olds are housed, explaining, on the way, that the boys are already settled in their bunks. He got them quieted down and into bed after campfire. I'm to have the top bunk on the right just inside the door. There are no lights in the

bunkhouse. As we approach, a disorganized chorus of voices greets us. I think we have interrupted a pillow fight in the dark.

Mr. Prince stands on the top step leading to the door and announces, "Lyle Glazier, your camp leader is here. He will be in charge now. Make him welcome. He will have the first bunk on the left at the top. Happy dreams, all of you. Lyle will get you up for your morning dip when the bugle blows at six o'clock." He has gone into the darkness.

Carrying my laundrybag stuffed with dudds, I step into the pitchblack. Everything is suddenly quiet. I say, "How are you all, anyway?"

A scattering of voices respond. I say, "Settle down now, and go back to sleep. I'll see you all in the morning."

My strange voice seems to have quieted them. I throw my bag onto my bunk, reach up and open the drawstring and paw inside for my pajamas. Somebody at the other end of the bunkhouse turns on a flashlight. I can see eyes everywhere, focusing on me. I undress, throw my clothes onto the foot of my bunk, reach up and turn down the covers, then lift myself into bed.

I call, "Whoever you are, thanks for the light. You'd better everybody catch some sleep now."

I congratulate myself on the silence. After a while I'm dropping off to sleep when I hear a whisper, coming from the

other end of the bunkhouse from where I had the help of the flashlight.

"You awake, Jim?" A pause, then "Don Harper has been put in charge of the big boys this year."

An answering whisper, "Did you get a good look at the new one?"

"Shhh. Do you think he can hear us?"

After another silence, "I think he's asleep. Do you think if we protest, Mr. Prince might give us Don back?"

I lie there feeling abandoned. There are no more whispers, as if they have been shocked into silence by the voice of this stranger. I decide that tomorrow morning I will have to take charge in a hurry or I'm a goner.

Sooner than I would have expected, I drop off to sleep in the fresh lakeside air, and at the 6 o'clock bugle, jump into my bathing trunks and grope around in the laundry bag for my towel. Looking around in dawn light, for the first time I can see the bunkhouse. Every upper and lower bunk is taken. I see only the frowsy tops of their heads, heavy woolen blankets drawn up around their ears.

I rouse my sleepy eleven- and twelve-year olds, challenging them to a race to the beach. The sun is below the eastern horizon, its rays turning to gold the undersides of a flotilla of cotton candy clouds. A cold mist is rising over the water. I have no mercy on my flock, but herd them ahead complaining of the freezing air. When we reach the gravelly edge of the beach,

they lift high their tendersoled feet, and I drive them into the icy water, where they suddenly come alive, splashing me and each other. They watch as I wade out and dive under and swim underwater coming up so far out they hardly believe it. I swim back. Although their teeth are chattering, they are glowing with achievement. We linger only long enough to come intensely alive in our horse play, interrupted by the second bugle blast calling to breakfast. I herd them back ahead of me into the dormitory and into their clothes and to the mess tent for pitchers of milk, hot oatmeal, buttered toast and bananas. I have no more need to spur their morale. They are all over each other getting acquainted, sharing experiences since last year. They welcome me as if I am their older brother. When I meet Don Harper, their last year's counselor, promoted to assistant director of the camp, I have no need to be jealous. They flock around him everybody talking at once in their eagerness to introduce their new counselor.

I take them on birdwalks, flower walks, and mineral walks, where we find feldspar, fool's gold, mica, granite, limestone, sandstone, and one Indian arrowhead. When it is my turn, I give my once-a-week after-lunch pep talk, not on a religious subject like the older counselors, but I talk about waking from a sound sleep to fresh morning air and a morning dip and hot breakfast, and new friendships and old ones renewed, and how lucky we are to explore the treasures of woods and fields that surround us.

Two weeks pass in a whirl of days devoted to morning swim, breakfast and nature walks, lunch and afternoon baseball for the boys and sewing or cooking for the girls, then dinner and evening campfire. There are prayers before breakfast, lunch and dinner, and Mr. or Mrs. Prince give a religious message every noon after lunch. Both are students at a seminary, preparing for their first fulltime parish. Sunday we pile into cars and drive to Moores Corner Church for a revival sermon. My longhouse full of grammar school boys are too physical to be pious. When it is time to part, we are staunch friends swearing to meet again for camp meeting the last two weeks in August next year.

Book II.04WICKED...and Spotless as the Lamb

Chapter Four

-1-

Except English, History, and Science, I teach everything. This means Arithmetic, Music, Drawing, Penmanship (Palmer Method), and Playground. I'm supposed to organize some sort of sports for recess and noon hour. Baseball is the only sport our country boys have had experience in, as well as the only one I know anything about.

From a closet off Miss Ingraham's science/history room the boys fetch a ball and bat, catcher's mask and breast protector, and at noon the first day we organize two practice teams. Center School has never before had a man teacher. I'm the first one, the first time they have had any coaching. When I take attendance the first morning, I discover the Hurley seventh grader twins. The boys gobble their lunches. I let the Hurley boys choose sides. Noon hour goes like a flash. They would like to have baseball at recess, too, but I talk it over that night with Larry and he agrees that at Number Four School House, nothing brought the school together more than our coeducational games. So I talk the next morning before school with Helen Vorse, the English teacher and Miss Ingraham, and decide to keep baseball for the lunch hour, while Miss Ingraham organizes play for the girls. Recess will be coeducational. I think a word

from me will set them playing tag, pom pom pullaway, hide and seek, drop the handkerchief, tug of war, and other games, boys and girls together.

-2-

Three weeks into September, when we come outdoors at noon, we hear of the murder of Headmaster Elliott Speer at Mount Hermon over across the river at Mount Hermon in Gill. The night before after dinner somebody standing below outside his study window shot him as he stood in lamplight, a book in his hand. Gossip spread that the handsome and popular young Headmaster set out to relax the religious regimen established by Dwight L. Moody and carried on for more than four decades by Headmaster Cutler. Elliott Speer even proposed coeducational ballroom dancing in cooperation with Northfield Seminary for Girls five miles away. I didn't feel personally affected but, officially, the whole town was in mourning.

-3-

Two weeks later, October 2, Larry and I rode to Moores Corner with Clayton and Abbie for the funeral of Gramma Glazier. Not only our whole family but people from all over Leverett filled the church on the hill. As with Mom and Pop, Reverend Truesdale came from Bernardston. We sang the same songs and heard the same service except it was for somebody who had come closer to living out her years. She was in her sixties, not an old woman, but not like Mom and Pop who had been only 51 and 43 when they took their lives. Even so Gram's death was untimely.

Since the car accident on the way to Pittsfield when she was thrown against the roof, Gram had made a comeback until a year ago almost to the day, when she had been there alone in the house and heard the gunshot, and found her oldest son. We had all suffered, but nobody could know how much Gram suffered. None of us could imagine, or even try to imagine what greeted her when she rushed around the west end of the barn.

She was buried in the old burying ground beside the stream on the road to Brushy Mountain just before you reach Bournes's dam. In that old graveyard, the graves of the first settlers lie to the east. Gram's was opened almost against the west fence. Since Pop's suicide she had wasted away with a recurrence of cancer. There was room beside her for Gramp. He was a big man, still hale and vigorous at seventy-four.

-4-

Every day Superintendent Robbins came at noon as well as frequently at the end of the day to give his sixth grade granddaughter a ride home. It takes some time to clear a large room of twelve rows of students. At noon the very first day when I was giving my "First row stand, pass," I hadn't progressed far before I realized that Mr. Robbins was standing behind me. About the third day, he started asking questions. First it was current events, then, one day in the middle of my dismissal spiel (synchronized with a watchful eye over the entire room to spot incipient disorder) he asked, "Have you ever studied Geology?"

"Yes. Next row, stand, pass."

Even without looking at him, I could tell by his manner I had lit a spark. His next question was exploratory but hopeful:

"I don't suppose you know fool's gold?"

It was four years since I got A in Geology, but my answer was not tentative: "Oh, you mean copper pyrite?"

I could hear his sigh of relief.

From then on I suffered geological inquisition. One day it was drumlin, then esker, terminal morain, and an inquiry into the ice age. This went on for a week and led naturally to a catalogue of dinosaurs, and whether I had viewed footprints in the Connecticut River below Amherst. Then it was stalagmite and stalactite, then the link between marble and limestone. And had I ever seen a geode? Did I know potholes? I was thankful for last summer's review course when the summer camp boys and I explored minerals along the shoreline of Locks Pond. He also took me on a review course of glaciers and earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, then strata (sandstone, limestone, granite) and did I have any idea which were older -- the Rocky Mountains or the Green Mountains? and had I ever heard of spiral nebulae? It was as if buried in his past Mr. Robbins had a Geologist for a grandfather, or perhaps he had once aspired to be a professor. I never asked and he never told me. I think at first his questions were idle, to find out whether like a four-handed carpenter I could do two things at once, but in time I think we were carrying on our catechism for its own sake.

Mr. Robbins became in a paternal, gentle way my mentor. When I discover we have a problem at noon and close of school with noisy eruptions among big boys out of sight going down stairs, Mr. Robbins doesn't comment until after I have announced I'm appointing a proctor to stand halfway down, on the platform, and report to me the name of any trouble maker. There will be a prize at midyears and year's end for the most efficient proctor.

At New Year's I report that the prize winner is the Polish seventh grader from Northfield Farms, who excels in nothing but his diligence as proctor. I don't mention that this boy lived across the meadow from the house where I grew up and was the same boy, who as a child, when he was five and I a freshman in high school used to wait for me when I got off the bus and follow me home, and hang around while I changed my clothes, then follow me in the dooryard and into the backyard till one day I touched him on the fly of his overalls. His sister, a few years older, appeared the next day and put the fear of God in me. Now eight years later he is in my seventh grade adoring me and our only contact is his becoming the best turn-of-the-stairs proctor I have. He is rewarded with a box of chocolates and a badge worn proudly all second semester as he carries on his duties to the end of the year when his reward is a second box of caramels.

It is Mr. Robbins who hears the rumor that at recess or noon some of the boys are sneaking into the basement to smoke cigarets. Our seventh grade janitor, son of Mr. Robbins' secre-

tary, provided a list of names, encouraged to do so by his mother, Mr. Robbins suggests I compose a letter to parents:

Dear Mr. and Mrs. _____:

Your son _____ has been reported as one of a group of boys who have been smoking cigarets in the school basement. Not only is it bad for his health but he could set Center School on fire.

From upstairs we have only two exits -- an inside wooden stairs at the front and at the rear a metal fire escape outside the Science room window . A basement fire with school in session would make it difficult to get every body out safe.

Please talk with _____ to persuade him to stop smoking. Then please sign on the bottom line, and ask him to return the letter to me.

Yours sincerely,
Lyle Glazier, Principal,
Center Graded School

Parent's Signature _____

-5-

Another disciplinary incident I handle without notifying Superintendent Robbins. By Massachusetts educational law, only the school principal is empowered to give corporal punishment--always in the presence of a witness.

Miss Ingraham never brought a student to me, but Helen Vorse appeared after school at my desk with a squirming boy in

tow. As she approached, she was proclaiming, "Mr. Glazier is going to punish you for making a disturbance."

I ask the boy if he is guilty, and he says, "She gave us paperwork and we were all bored. She was reading a book."

Helen says, "He was rude and insubordinate."

I put him across my knee, deliver a few smart spansks and let him go, telling him never to misbehave that way again.

The next time it is a six-foot Polish eighth grader, seventeen years old. He twice failed eighth grade, is taking it for the third time and failing every subject. He rides his motor cycle to a garage down the street and stores it during school hours. I have no doubt he is potentially a trouble raiser, and he makes no secret of his disdain for Miss Vorse. I never have any trouble with him in my classes, but I've thought of him as probably in school because of family pressure, and just waiting to be free. I ask if he is guilty and he says lackadaisically, "What do you think?"

There's a grin challenging me to do something. I pull back my chair from the desk and motion him to spread himself over my lap. On one side his arms stretch on the floor from his elbows, and on the other his legs from the knees. He is perfectly placid. I looked up at Helen and raised my eyebrows as if to say, "What now?" I gave him a few ineffectual pats, then reached up on the desk for a geography book, raised it, and delivered a couple flat whacks. That was all. He got up,

brushed himself off, went downstairs and Helen retired to her room.

A week later he had a motor cycle accident and was in the infirmary in East Northfield. After school I walk there, and am admitted to his room. One arm is bandaged and one leg in a sling, but he doesn't seem seriously injured.

He says, "The worst of it is I hit a rock and my front wheel caved in. It will cost a lot to fix. I'm going to get a job. I'm eighteen. I had my birthday, and my father says I can drop out of school."

I don't try to stop him. We talk for a while, then he says, "Mr. Glazier, that afternoon when Miss Vorse brought me to your room, I could have got up and thrown you out of the second floor window."

I say, "I know you could, but I knew you weren't going to."

He gave me a halfway look that didn't commit himself one way or the other.

-6-

Mr. Robbins suggested I organize a fall festival at the Town Hall for the whole grammar school to display for parents, schoolboard and friends the skill the children were developing in singing. I got Miss Wright to prepare a program for her first and second graders, and Miss Dalton for the third and fourth. I use Friday afternoon music classes to practice soprano and alto and tenor and bass sections for performing some sacred and profane songs of Christmas. It is the first time

they ever tried part singing. Even the biggest eighth graders who thought it sissy to sing, found they could sing bass without being ashamed. Mr. Robbins asked the East Northfield school and the West Northfield School across the river and the first four grades at Number Four School House in Northfield Farms to join us. The Town Hall was packed. Parents from all over town filled the auditorium. Last on the program was the harmonizing four-part singing of Center Graded Junior High School.

On the street next day I met Clayton who said, "That part singing was was something. But I think I heard your tenor from behind the curtain."

I say, "Not tenor, -- alto."

-7-

Principal of the East Northfield Graded School, Esther Williamson, is President of The Northfield Drama Circle and invites me to her house for their Fall 1934 organization meeting. She is from one of the leading families, the Manchesters, who own the Chevrolet Garage and a big colonial house at the foot of Main Street. Esther married her handsome classmate Bud Williamson and for a number of years they were leaders of the young married set till Bud, a Volunteer Fireman, drove the new fire engine off the road rounding a curve and struck a tree, smashing the engine and killing himself. He left Esther with one daughter, who was eleven years old when I returned there.

I can hardly believe that this important and almost-middle-aged widow has invited me to join her select theater group. They are putting on a light comedy, The Farmer's Daughter, and have ten copies of French's Drama Production script. I am late arriving because I had to get supper for Larry and we washed and put away dishes and Larry was at work on homework before I could leave. By the time I arrive at the Manchesters' I can hear from the street the meeting in full swing. They are reading parts. They stop everything while Esther introduces me, saying she hardly has to because I'm the one who has just staged the fall festival at the Town Hall. She's the farmer's daughter and the new English teacher at the high school, Ralph Taylor, is the village minister, a bachelor. The farmer's daughter has set her cap for him. She gives me the part of the farmer, a comic character whose voice I immediately translate into the nasal whine of Grampa Glazier. It isn't a big part but I like it, partly because, although I appear in every scene, there won't be too much to memorize.

In the group is a contemporary of Esther, Leon Dunnell, heavy set unmarried graduate of Boston Conservatory, who teaches piano lessons. His father has the franchise on heating oil for the town. Leon has never had to do a stroke of manual labor, and, spoiled by his mother, is tolerated by, and somewhat guardedly popular with, everybody. The youngest man in the group Seth Field was in high school when I was. The Field Family, like the Parker family on the other side of the street

(Mrs. Parker is the cousin of Mrs. Field) goes back to first settlers. The Fields once owned a chunk of bottom land along the Connecticut River on the flats west of the CV Railroad tracks, but over the years lost it through leasing then selling it to Polish immigrants, who are beginning to buy the big houses along Main Street.

Seth's father, Joe Field, has sold or rented their colonial mansion at the corner of Main and East, looking out on the double row of ancient maples planted by early settlers on both sides of the mile-long street. He has moved his family into a less historic but quite comfortable house next door in back of the mansion, and has been given the sinecure of janitor of the new Town Hall, whose age can be determined from my 1928 class's having been (six years ago) first to hold graduation exercises there. Within two years of Joe Field's taking over as janitor, he has become so slack housekeeping the men's room in the basement that the owner of the drugstore a half block away at the corner of Depot Street (upgraded to Parker Avenue) remarks that if a tourist stops in at the drugstore asking directions to the Town Hall, he tells him, "Just cross the street to the corner of Warwick Avenue, turn right and follow your nose."

At the close of our rehearsal, Seth comes over and tells me he has a jazz band playing Saturday nights at various neighboring dancehalls, and he has heard I play the piano. He needs a pianist. I agree to try out. Leon Dunnell also introduces himself. Having heard us talking about music, he

tells me he will be playing at intermission for the play and asks if I will play some two-piano pieces with him. I'm flattered and agree to take a stab at it.

The play is a success. We put it on for two nights to a packed house. From back in the days when Lewis Wood put on plays at Number Four School House, I learned to memorize my part almost instantly, then feverishly reviewed it as we performed, keeping just ahead of each act.

That method still works well for me, but I'm sorry for Ralph Taylor, for whom this is his first stage experience, and he has the male lead. When he catches me in the wings on the first night after the second act and asks what is my secret -- because he is scared stiff and I seem cool -- I can only pat him on the back and say, "When you get home tonight, and all day tomorrow, keep telling yourself 'I'm not going to be nervous.'"

Actually, I'm not in such good shape at the moment, for Leon Dunnell is superintending having the grand piano pushed to center stage front, and has told me that I am to perform up there while he will play from the upright offstage on the floor.

We play first a fourhanded arrangement of Perry Grainger's "Country Gardens." Leon in the well of the house is playing inspired improvisations around the simple melodic line I am drumming out on the grand piano. The net effect is extremely flattering to me, upraised as I am. We get an ovation from an audience that before that moment hadn't, most of them, realized I could play a note on the piano. We follow with "Danny Boy,"

or, as Leon prefers to introduce it, "Londonderry Air." We get a second ovation. Fortunately there's no time for an encore. The prompter is hissing from the wings to get the piano offstage, draw the curtain, and open it again for Act III.

"The Farmer's Daughter" is such a success that we're invited to carry it to Brattleboro to benefit the Baptist Church at the south end of Main Street, where the road to Greenfield turns south uphill. We have another success. Gramma Briggs has come to the performance. Afterward I walk her home a mile and a half north almost to the very end of Main Street, where Route 30 tips down toward where Aunt Iona works in Brattleboro Retreat and Chase Street swings uphill to the west. It takes a long time to get to 2 1/2 Chase Street. I spare only a moment to say hello to Uncle Forrest and Aunt Iona, then have ahead of me the long walk back to the church. About half way, just beyond the turn off of Route 9 West to Bennington, I am hailed. I have reached Brattleboro's most public public house just as Ralph Taylor staggers down the steps, having sought relief from his introduction to stage center. He throws his arm across my shoulder and welcomes me as his favorite fellow traveler. He is singing ribald songs as we walk downhill then up the brief grade to the church. We have both missed the post-performance feast prepared by the ladies of the church; however, they insist on our sampling leftovers. I try my best to persuade Ralph that a small new England town is not as cosmopolitan as the Boston suburb he grew up in. Without drawing even more attention to

the two of us I try to get across to him the danger of exaggerating his condition but he is too full of beer and good feeling to heed. There's no way, short of bad manners, to separate myself from his company.

Two days later, Monday afternoon after school, I'm surprised to see Mrs. Huber, the mother of our seventh grade janitor, a woman of substance, pulling herself upstairs into the homeroom, where I'm sorting arithmetic papers about to go home.

She hems and haws and remarks on the weather and on the tidiness of the home room, a tribute, I think, to her son. Then she gets down to business. letting me have it straight:

"I suppose you must know your behavior Saturday night is common gossip all over town."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean you and Ralph Taylor coming back to the church both of you drunk."

"Look, Mrs. Huber, I didn't even go into the pub. After the play, I walked my grandmother home way up to the end of Main Street, and got back just in time to meet Ralph coming from the bar. And he wasn't drunk, either."

"That's not the way I heard it."

"I don't care how you heard it."

The next day, when Mr. Robbins comes upstairs to stand in back of me during noon dismissal, I push aside his question on volcanic formations in the Hawaiian Isles. At the fore of my mind is knowledge that Mrs. Huber is his secretary. Without

interrupting my routine of "Third row, stand, pass," I throw back at him through my teeth, "Has Mrs. Huber been telling you her yarn?"

I can feel his surprise at my vehemence, "Lyle, Mrs. Huber is Northfield's most notorious gossip."

"After yesterday, that's no news to me. Fourth row, stand, pass."

"Whoa, now, don't get excited."

"Fifth row, stand, pass. Mr. Robbins, after the play, I walked my grandmother home, and Ralph Taylor wasn't drunk either. Most of it was just showing off."

Mr. Robbins laid his hand on my shoulder.

"Sixth row, stand, pass. I think Mrs. Huber is reprehensible"

"Lyle, you have established a good reputation in Northfield. You needn't worry that Blanche Huber will do you harm."

"Seventh row, stand..."

Little goldenhaired Sylvia is passing out of sight downstairs raising her blue eyes to her grandfather and me.

Mr. Robbins gives my shoulder a warm squeeze, and hurries off in pursuit of his granddaughter.

-8-

Right after New Years Mr. Robbins makes me an offer from the School Board of \$50 for the rest of the year if I will take

charge of June Wright's third and fourth graders noon hours so she can go home for lunch.

June invites me for dinner, when she and I and Rena Tyler and Ben Johnson, son of my landlords, have a feast in Dr. Wright's big house, where I've been only once before when I had Whooping Cough. After dinner Rena and I ride in the back seat and Ben and June in front and drive to Bernardston. Feeling adventurous, we would like to have beers at the Inn, but settle on rootbeer at the drugstore. Rena is tiny. I used to see her at the new Town Hall at a Saturday night dance, dancing with her father, when she was in grammar school. Mr. Tyler was lame, but he danced every dance with his small daughter. Nobody else ever danced with her. The Tylers live in one of those great white houses on Main Street with tall pillars at the front. Now Rena is in high school and still tiny. I think of her as a child, but in the back seat she cuddles and shows every sign of wanting a petting party, but I'm not quite up to it. Up front Ben is driving with his left hand while he cuddles June with the right. I guess Rena must think I'm pretty tame, but cuddling is all I can muckle.

-9-

I have been singing bass in the Congregational Church choir across the road from our apartment. Mr. A. P. Fitt sings tenor. After the first January rehearsal, he takes me aside and tells me they are having trouble with rowdiness in the Sunday School. Some of the high school boys are downright rude to Mrs. Swansea,

who has been Superintendent for years and never has had trouble before, but this year the boys have got out of hand. She wants a vacation, Her father in Albany is dying of inflammatory rheumatism and she wants to be with him for a month. They wonder if I will pinch hit for her and take over the superintendency while she is gone. Perhaps I can straighten out those fractious youngsters. I take on the job and don't have the least trouble. After a couple of weeks I take them aside and give them a good combing over about their behavior with Mrs. Swansea and they agree they have been nasty to her. Actually, I think they were only mischievous. At any rate, they promise to behave themselves, and after she comes back in midFebruary, I never hear she has any trouble.

-10-

The week after New Years we have a January thaw that comes at a good time because although our apartment has been chilly, I think the higher temperature makes it a good time to invite Sonny Iverson for dinner. He is one of my few friends, a tenor in the choir, a senior day student at Mount Hermon. We have become friends without ever meeting outside church. He and I have been talking literature, for which I have a longing after a half year of teaching arithmetic in grammar school. I have in mind discussing with him two books -- Thornton Wilder's The Woman of Andros and a new book I've just bought called Salah and His American by an expatriate living in Morocco. Secretly I have a crush on Sonny and want to know him better. I dicker

with Larry to spend a weekend with Junior Lynch in Northfield Farms, while I invite Sonny for dinner on Friday. I plan to make a chocolate frosted cake and for the main dish have the stuffed pork chops I once tried for my piano student friend at Middlebury just before Larry came to live with me. Thursday was a blustery day without snow, but Friday comes on in midmorning with a raging blizzard, and the temperature at three o'clock school closing falls already below zero. School busses are waiting outside for the children, and nobody stays after school. I button my heavy overcoat, stop at the butcher shop for the chops on order, and bend into the storm for the half mile walk, snow pummeling me so fiercely I can't see the two rows of maples across the street. That morning as usual, to save fuel I had left the thermostat turned down to overnight low. When I get home, the radiators in the bedroom and living room are barely lukewarm. I turn them up before I bake the cake in the kitchen ell, and by five it seems to me the temperature indoors is beginning to thaw. It is still far from comfortable. I wonder if I should go over to the Johnson main house and telephone Sonny to postpone our date. However, the cake is baked and frosted, and I don't want the chops, with their carefully prepared pouches, to go to waste. At five thirty I start sweet potatoes in the oven, and put on a pot of water for steaming carrots and broccoli and celery on top of the stove. I stuff the chops and put them in the oven with the sweet potatoes. Testing both radiators, I find they are, if anything, colder

than when I tested them before. I planned to take a shower, but the bathroom is so cold I simply change into my best suit. In this frigid temperature, we certainly are not going to have the leisurely conversation over literature and music I have been looking forward to. I almost hope Sonny won't come, but he's right on time.

I apologize for the temperature. Dinner is ready. We sit at the ell table eating from plates that have been warmed but on which fat from the chops congeals. The hot baked potatoes and steamed vegetables turn cold on our plates. It is so cold Sonny's teeth start chattering. We rush through our cake and coffee. I try to make a joke of it by asking if he doesn't think we'd better go get our mittens.

I excuse myself and go along the ell to the Johnson door and rouse Mr. Johnson from his after-dinner pipe, and he comes back with me to Sonny sitting at the dinner table with its unwashed dishes coated with congealed grease and chocolate frosting.

Mr. Johnson goes directly to the bathroom, then comes back and announces, "Pipes frozen."

"What can we do?"

"Nothing tonight. I'll turn off the water from the main house, and drain your pipes. I think we got it in time."

He seems almost cheerful and hurries off along the ell.

When I turn on the hot water spout to do dishes, not even a trickle of water comes.

I say, "My hands are freezing.

Sonny says, "Maybe I better get going."

I help him into his coat and after he leaves go along the ell to the Johnson apartment seeking advice. Mr. Johnson says, "A freeze like this will take time. Maybe a couple of days, maybe as long as a week. I think maybe you'd better call the Tavern and you and Larry plan to stay there a few days."

Actually, repairs look as if they will take much more than a week, and Mr. Barker at the Ye Olde Taverne ("On the New England Bridal Trail") nextdoor to the Graded School makes us a bargain offer for a large groundfloor room and meals in the diningroom. We decide to move our things from the apartment and cancel our lease. Since the Johnsons are still waiting to replace an elbow pipe that burst, they have little choice. It seems such a relief not to have to get meals on the table. Bedding is taken care of. We don't have to send out laundry. We wake up in the morning and go to the diningroom. To and from school, I simply walk next door.

-11-

After I finished my spell as superintendent of the Sunday School, I stayed on in the choir. Although I've been singing with the choir six months now, I have never taken communion, simply pass along the round wooden tray with its unappetizing dry chunks of bread and don't take any of the grape juice that substitutes for wine. On Palm Sunday, Mr. Fitt leaves the tenor section and comes to stand beside me and sings bass. During the

communion service he is watching when I send on the bread to the next customer and don't lift one of the sparkling little glasses of grape juice out of its cradle in the wine tray.

Mr. Fitt is a tall man. He leans over and whispers loud enough for most of our neighbors in the choir to hear, "Lyle, don't you believe in the saving grace of the body and blood of Our Savior?"

I don't mince matters and whisper back, "No."

I expect to be chastised, but he simply gives me a reproving look, and after the closing hymn and prayer walks away.

Shortly after this, I get a message from Mrs. Montague that Mrs. W. R. Moody has heard of my piano playing, and has requested I be invited to play at the Fortnightly Club's next meeting at the High School.

Since there is a piano at the Taverne, I have been practising, and catching up on "To a Wild Rose" and my other pieces. I don't want to play anything extravagant like "Minuet a L'Antique" or "Marche Militaire" but work on the MacDowell and a new piece in my workbook, "On a Silent Woodland-Path" by a brand new composer for me, Richard Strauss. I manage to screw up courage to play both without stumbling. Mrs. Moody is agreeably congratulatory.

A month before spring vacation, Mr. Robbins suggests it would be good to have a grammar school Spring Festival to match the Fall Festival that went so well. What with playing in Seth

Field's jazzband and taking June Wright's kiddies for the lunch hour, and singing in the church choir, as well as having to cope with an act of nature in that freezeup, I am not enthusiastic about picking up another major project, so I let the new suggestion fall flat without acting on it.

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I am really tired by spring vacation, and when Larry gets invited to stay with Junior Lynch, I accept an invitation from Leon Dunnell to go with him and some friends of his on a three-day trip to the Sky Line Drive. I never before heard of it but gather it is somewhere southwest of Washington. The driver will be Postmaster Bruce McKay, who will be trying out his new Buick sedan. His younger sister Edith will go, and Seth Field's younger brother, Calvin, a junior in high school, and a nurse Mable McGinnis I don't know, whose cousin lives down in the last house before the CV station on Parker Avenue. It will cost a lot of money -- maybe as much as fifty to seventy-five dollars -- but I think perhaps I have earned it.

We spend the first night in Washington. Not knowing where to stay, we make for the Capitol and find a medium-priced hotel nearby, believing that a hotel near the heart of the nation can't help but be good. As we walk into the lobby, Edith's bag flops open scattering lingerie. We distance ourselves from the scarlet-faced bellhop pawing around feverishly to assemble and conceal the garments. The two girls room together, and Leon takes Calvin because his mother (cater-cousin to Leon's mother)

allowed him to go only if he were strictly in Leon's charge. Bruce and I share a twin-bedded room. The next morning we wake early to a great banging of garbage barrels and looking out of the window discover that the back of the hotel abuts on a Negro slum, black faces everywhere, grown boys kicking garbage pails as if to get revenge on them and elderly men lounging on doorsteps. We turn southwest and, after filling up on gas, drive onto the parkway along the crest of the Blue Ridge. We had the foresight to have lunches packed at the hotel, but at nightfall must descend into a valley to find a motel.

This time again we have two rooms but I sleep with Leon and Calvin with Bruce. During the night I have cuddled spoonfashion up to Leon and wake tight up against him with an erection and soon feel Leon stir and am confident he has noticed. I pull away and lie on my back but he doesn't turn toward me. After a while I turn away from him and fall into a deep sleep. The next day, we drive back to the top of the ridge and swing north on top of the mountain reversing the way we had come. Leon and Bruce and the girls spend most of the time telling dirty stories, one after the other. I don't know any to tell.

Calvin and I sit in front, I at the window and Calvin riding the shifting gear. We are squeezed tight and I soon reach my left arm over his shoulder and find him cuddling against me. The stories get to me and I'm soon carrying a bone that I never get rid of till it's time to stop for the night. At supper time we are in Virginia. When I order two beat-up

eggs with sugar and milk and vanilla extract, the waitress makes a big thing of it, and I get a ribbing from everybody. In our motel, we men share one room with a double bed and two singles. Calvin undresses fast and gets into the double bed and sings out, "I want to sleep with Lyle."

I want to sleep with him but don't risk it. I say, "My balls are so sore I wouldn't trust myself."

Bruce says, "In the army we used to call it Blue Balls, it's what you get when a lot of men are together trading dirty jokes."

I show him my balls and he says, "There's nothing wrong with you you won't get over."

He and I sleep in the single beds and Leon and Calvin together. By nightfall Saturday we are back in Northfield.

Sunday after the morning service, I see Leon in church. He tells how that morning when Calvin was on his bike taking back to Buddy Parker's trenchcoat borrowed for the trip, a tail of the coat got caught in the spokes of the back wheel and the coat got torn to shreds.

Monday in school the day after Easter recess, the kids are restless. I have a tough day and at three o'clock half a dozen children have lingered for help with arithmetic. I am hard at work with them when Calvin and Buddy appear at the top of the stairs. I lift my hand to them, and Calvin brings Buddy over to introduce him. I explain that I have my hands full with all these students needing help. The two boys rather sheepishly

loiter around the room looking at homework posted on the walls. When I look up after a time they have gone.

I have a real crush on Calvin and often after supper walk out Warwick Avenue and take the first right turn down to East Street, but never swing back toward Main and the Field home. I think I will die if I don't catch sight of Calvin, and try to wish him to come out to join me, but do nothing more, and fortunately (I guess) he never does.

-13-

The end of our year comes with a rush. Mr. Robbins assumes I will be returning for a second year. I'm offered a raise of \$50 -- from \$900 to \$950. When I ask if I will continue to supervise June Wright's pupils at lunch time, his answer is "Yes."

When I ask, "The whole year?" without batting an eyelash his answer is again, "Yes."

He raises another problem. Among our seniors we have three boys all over age who have failed every course taken with all three teachers. Naturally we didn't promote them for graduation. Mr. Robbins asks me as Principal to overrule the other teachers and pass the boys. For financial reasons the Board doesn't want them held back. They could be in eighth grade for ever. I talk with Helen and Beatrice and without trying to persuade them, ask their opinion. They point out that if we pass these boys in spite of their total failures, the news will spread and we will have no leverage over our eighth graders.

Every freeloader will think he can thumb his nose at us. I agree with them, and go back to Mr. Robbins and tell him we are standing firm.

He says, "But as Principal, you have the authority to overrule the others."

I reply, "If you and the Schoolboard want to pass them over our heads, you can do so, but we have agreed not to."

The boys graduate with their class.

-14-

To my astonishment I have an offer to teach at Mount Hermon. Last year one of their housemasters lost control. There's a huge dormitory called Crossley, a long four-story building with fire doors dividing it into three separate dorms with a hundred boys in each dorm. I'm offered South Crossley, where the housemaster has been fired. It's quite clear I'm being hired as a disciplinarian rather than as a teacher. I'll get less pay -- only \$720, but I'll have free board and room, and, if I come there, tuition and board and room for Larry. I have a perfunctory meeting with Mr. Smith, chairman of English, who tells me offhandedly that I will be expected to teach two sections, one in sophomore English, the other in Advanced Grammar. He doesn't really interview me for the job. The most explicit information he gives me is: "You will drill your sophomores on rules 221f and 221g in Woolley's Handbook of Composition on the use of a comma with independent and subordinate clauses. No boy can pass sophomore English without

mastering those rules." I'm not sure I understand him, but decide not to question him. I think it a frivolous command, as if nothing matters in Sophomore English except mastery of those two rules. Is he, perhaps, testing my esprit de combat?

Since Ralph Taylor has been rehired at the High School, I know there's no chance for me there, so if I want to teach English, Mount Hermon offers an opportunity.

Talking it over with Melvin who is living with his inlaws, the Cookes, in Greenfield, I learn that although he never took required Education courses, he wishes now he had. I ask if he would like to have me speak a word for him with Mr. Robbins, and he says, "Yes."

I had been intending to let the Superintendent know that I know their offer of a \$50 advance is really a decrease because I will be supervising the third and fourth graders a whole year and get only the raise I got at midyears. However, since I already have the job at Mount Hermon, I simply resign and make a pitch for my brother.

Mr. Robbins says, "Lyle, you are making a mistake. I can make a real schoolman out of you if you will stay with me."

I tell him I have made up my mind to go to Mount Hermon.

I soon hear that after talking with the schoolboard, he has offered the Principalship to Mel, who immediately leases a small house on Highland Avenue in East Northfield. He and Bernice move there, and take Larry and me for roomers the last two weeks in June. By now our apartment at the Johnson house has been re-

paired, and the Johnsons want to know if we would like to renew our lease. When Ralph Taylor hears that the apartment is vacant, he moves his family from cramped quarters on the second floor of Ye Olde Taverne. All this loss of renters is a great blow to the tavern keeper, who accuses me of ingratitude after we two orphans in a blizzard were given the bounty of a benevolent landlord.

"I have dreamed of making the tavern a haven for teachers. I have been good to you and your brother. And here you are, not only not coming back next year but you vacate your room before the end of June, and you take the Taylors with you, for they have rented your old apartment."

It's a sad state of affairs for which I have no remedy.

-15-

For the first time since Larry and I have lived together, we must share a double bed in the spare room at Melvin's and Bernice's. I think it will have to make do. In two weeks I will be leaving. If I wait on table for board and room, I have just enough money for tuition for Middlebury's Bread Loaf Summer School beginning the first of July. Larry will stay with Melvin and Bernice and help Mel with his bread route.

-16-

Mable McGinnis has bought herself a new Chevrolet coupe and starts coming by Mel's to take me for a drive. I'm not interested in this 30-year-old nurse, but I pretend to be flirting with her, and, to tell the truth, I am aroused by her inter-

est. Without telling her I will soon be leaving for the summer, I even propose we have a weekend together at the beach along the Massachusetts coast. We play with the idea.

Three nights before I'm to leave for Middlebury, I borrow Mel's car and drive down for an evening with her at her cousin's house on Parker Avenue. I find her stretched on a couch in the livingroom, where she lies like a petrified log making no effort to entertain me. Gradually I take a kind of command, lying on top of her, then pushing up her clothes and climbing on top of her and opening my fly. She is a big girl and I a small man, a kind of fly on a cherry pie. I work my way in toward the center without any encouragement. It's totally my doing, the first time I have pushed in toward what is for a normal male the maximum prize. It feels good but without help I don't really penetrate, simply poke at the door without opening it. The evening grows late. Her cousin and somebody else drive into the yard and come into a back room without interrupting us. I am pushing in toward the cosy center, but still don't make it.

For at least three hours I have been lying there over her. Finally, she sighs and draws her thighs together, and I think I may have achieved something for her. I can hear her beginning to snore.

It's well past midnight. I give up, pull down her dress, zip my fly and feel my way through the kitchen through the back door to Mel's car and find my exit blocked by her cousin's car. There's a porch on my left, and a tree on my right and no exit

except forward. I could drive ahead, but if I did, I would still not be able to swing around and squeeze past the other car.

I go into the house to the back bedroom, where, feeling in the dark, I realize both men are in bed, huddled together.

In desperation I air my plight: "I can't get past your car out of your driveway!"

After a great effort (apparently) I get a reply, "For God's sake, drive onto the lawn, get out of here, and leave us alone."

I get out of there fast and follow his directions onto the lawn, drop into the ditch and onto the street and back home to Highland Avenue, where I creep in with Larry as quietly as I can.

Two days later, the day before I'm leaving for Bread Loaf, I come down with a dose of poison ivy from some shiny leaves I'd noticed beside the highway on one of my evening walks downtown, ineffectually stalking Calvin.

To make things worse, sometime in the night every night Larry has taken to creeping out of bed from beside my wiggling, itching anatomy and takes refuge on a settee on the sunporch. Mornings at breakfast Bernice complains loudly.

She is ordering him around like a two-year-old. "I don't want to wake up again and see you on the settee in front of our window. If Lyle can't handle you, maybe your older brother can!"

I leave for Bread Loaf with bumps on my hands that spread to my buttocks and finally to my genitals. I take a hot shower that only makes it itch worse. All the way to Middlebury on the bus I can hardly stand it. It is itching like all get out!

BOOK II.05WICKED...and Spotless as the Lamb

Chapter Five

-1-

My room is upstairs in the main inn, my roommate Greg Eastman, who graduated a couple years ahead of me. A debater, everybody knew him. As an undergraduate, he was famous for debating and for never being seen without Georgianna Haywood. She majored in Sociology, or virtually Marriage and the Family. They were quite publicly in each other's arms and (we all assumed) beds. Greg was a great friend of the faculty. Prexy thought the world of him and Georgianna.

I got to the room first and picked the bed near the door. I am lucky to have the bath and shower room directly across the hall, and can hardly wait to peel off my hot traveling clothes and ease my itching body into a hot shower. The poison ivy is spreading, and showering provides momentary relief. In clean clothes, I feel better for ten minutes, then the itching is so bad I want to dig in there with fingernails attacking ankles, hands, wrists, groin and feet (especially toes) and scratch the hell out of it.

Bread Loaf is wonderful. We are on this mountain campus, the main building of which is the Inn, three stories of egg-yolk-yellow Victorian ugliness but marvelously so. The Inn upstairs

glazier

is honeycombed with tiny rooms, most of them just large enough to accommodate two single beds, a bureau and a chair, and two students. I am getting board and room for waiting on table in the big diningroom. Before supper tonight (our first assignment) we already had a meeting of the "hoi polloi," as we are called. I translate it "the Common Herd." Like scullion that was such an affliction to Mother Mason, matron at Hepburn, the phrase thumbs its nose at social caste. All the waiters and waitresses are students. Our Head Waiter is Charlie DuBois, my fellow student in Dick Brown's Milton course. He started studying at Bread Loaf as soon as he got through college, and now has a year head start over me. Since he had a black-haired, dark-skinned and brown-eyed girlfriend in Springfield Mass who used to come see him when he was in that Milton class, I am rather surprised to discover that here he seems to be deeply involved with blonde and blue-eyed Marian Swinton, whom he introduces as the waitress for three tables called "The Alley" along the west window reserved for elderly rich people who own their own properties just off campus. Some of them used to be guests in the old days when the Inn was owned by Joe Battell, the Uncle of Jessica Swift, my employer at the Community House. The Inn, a sprawling summer place for rich folks, was given to the College with a thousand acres of mountain campus. North, under the shadow of the Inn, there are two smaller buildings -- a new assembly hall with stage, called "The Little Theatre" and a library. Along the dirtroad leading up to the mountain, on

the left side beyond the Inn are three white-painted dormitories with wide porches -- "Cherry," "Birch," and "Maple." Graduated in size from one-story to two-story to three-story, they look like a chef's prize exhibit of white-frosted layer cakes. Across the road on the right are spread out three or four other houses of varying size. To the east, brooding over us is the loaf-of-bread mountain for which the campus is named. Around and above to the east stretches the great acreage of Vermont National Forest, with the Long Trail threading its way along the summit of the range. Since I know this well from summers traveling it with my two New York rich boys, Tommy and David Payne, and since in Northfield Farms as a boy I lived in a shantee on Northfield Mountain above the Connecticut River valley, I feel as if the Bread Loaf campus is next door to my natural habitat. If it weren't for that awful itching, I would consider myself in paradise.

-2-

I am taking three courses, play production, creative writing, and a course called "The Chief English Verse Forms" taught by Theodore Morrison, a teacher at Harvard who also teaches creative writing. After a year teaching everything but literature, I am hungry for these courses.

Play Production is a 3-hour course (the normal is 2) taught by a no-nonsense quiet managerial woman Hortense Moore assisted by a rugged young man everybody calls "Boz" (Boswell) a blustery but extremely capable stage manager assistant from

Simmons College, the college of Dr. Gay, Director of our summer school. Dr. Gay and his wife have a cottage to themselves and their daughter Dottie and husband Dick Gould, who are waitress and waiter. Dorothy is also a cleaning maid for the attic of Maple Cottage, where some of the male waiters live, and Dick is a heavy-lifting general errand boy for the school. He had been captain of football in the high school where both attended. Dottie married her high school big man on campus. She is obviously much more knowledgeable than he is, and he tries hard to assert his equality. They have frequent quite public quarrels.

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I think Ted Morrison is perfect. A youthful middle-aged man in the prime of life, he becomes immediately my idol. We meet in a tiny cottage with one fairly generous room across the road from the entrance to the Inn. The first night Ted talks informally about his desire to shift responsibility for the class to us students. The main event will be sharing of papers -- original short stories, autobiographical sketches, current event essays, poems -- in any style, serious or spoofing, lyrical or academic, but whatever style or medium, the very best we can make it. Anyone with a paper of any kind suitable for our next meeting is invited to submit it to Ted. He will read everything and decide who will be privileged to make presentations at that meeting.

In fact, he asks if anybody has something to present tonight, and we begin by hearing a story by a Bread Loaf Fellow

named Robert Whitehand from the University of Iowa. Ted introduces him as having had the honor of being included in Warren Bower's THE COLLEGE WRITER, 1933. Although that is where my informal essay "The Book Lady" appeared, I find myself shriveling at this contact with an already established author. Bob seems so confident and reads like a professional. I couldn't possibly have presented myself for lead off.

He prefaces his reading by saying he will not give us any hints what the story is about but will let us listen and decide, and after the reading tell him our ideas about his intention and execution.

It's an unassuming story, very straightforward and simple. A young man and woman, college age, have been getting acquainted but after a month or so still hardly know each other. They walk out on a date and slip into a patch of woods a half mile or so from campus. They fall into desultory conversation, their talk drifting this way and that way but it is obvious they have been circling a common thread, their interest in each other. Gradually the young man discovers that the girl is taking the lead. She is one step ahead of him in proposals if not in thought. Finally, she is the one who suggests they take off their clothes. What happens then is told simply and graphically with no hedging but no bad taste.

That is all there is to it. It's so simple I'm blessed if I know what I would say about it.

Fortunately, there are plenty of hands raised. Ted calls first on Thyra Vickery, a girl who has been in the class before. She is manager of the tea shop that is open for business afternoons in the room where we are meeting.

Thyra says, "It's the universal story of boy meets girl."

Somebody butts in, "I think the whole point is he doesn't come out and say in so many words exactly how it ends but we all know."

A male voice interjects, "It's so damnably proper, all of it, there's not a word a bluestocking could object to."

A girl, "Well, in the end, you have to admit it does get right down to the point." Everybody laughs. She blushes and backpedals, "I mean there's no doubt...I mean you'd have to be a ninny not to realize exactly what happens."

Ted mildly asks, "What's most important? What happens or the way it's told?"

Thyra: "How can you tell one from the other?"

Ted: "Maybe it's time to let Bob tell us what he intended."

Whitehand, "Everybody who has commented has been right. All I tried to do is tell the conventional story with roles reversed. The man is supposed to take the initiative, I gave the initiative to the girl."

Thyra, somewhat acidly, "Where it ought to be in the first place."

Everybody laughs.

I didn't say anything. I felt tied up inside, wanting to come out with something bright, and I couldn't think of a thing. Now the reading and discussion is over, I feel as if we have heard the ultimate short story. Bob Whitehand has written the story to end all stories. There is nothing more to say, it is so simple yet so absolute.

Ted asks, "Who's next?"

I hardly hear what follows. Somebody reads a poem. Somebody reads a mood description, all froth and cobweb, yet holding together like steel.

I am sweating, wondering if I should be taking this course, I feel way over my head. It never occurred to me to bring anything to turn in to Ted for next meeting.

I am standing in the corner waiting for the room to clear enough for me to get out. Bob Whitehand is talking to Ted. They look in my direction, and Bob comes over. "Ted thinks you are Lyle Glazier. I'm Bob Whitehand."

He holds out his hand, reaching down to me. Now he's standing, he towers over me, more than six feet tall. I am nervous but don't miss a word of what he's saying. "We people in the Iowa workshop liked your essay very much. We have a small magazine called AMERICAN PREFACES. When Wilbur Schramm, the Editor saw your name listed for Bread Loaf, he recognized it from having read my copy of The College Writer. He asked me to look you up. We wonder if you will submit something to the magazine."

We start to leave together. Thyra Vickery catches up and holds out one hand to each of us. "That was a humdinger of a story, Bob." Thyra and Bob are talking all the way to Maple. Bob says, "I room on the top floor with half a dozen waiters. I can invite you to come up, Lyle. I'm afraid women aren't allowed." He holds out his hand to Thyra, who says goodnight to us both.

Up there in the garret we enter a bedlam of voices, all talking at once. There's no chance to hold a conversation. Bob introduces me all around. Most of them I met at the Hoi Polloi organization meeting. I don't stay long. I'm in awe of Bob. I think of him as an accomplished author. I need to get away and rediscover myself. I like Bob immensely but feel obliterated by him. All evening I hardly thought about poison ivy but now it is itching. I want to get back for a hot shower. But most of all I want to collect my thoughts to see what I can come up with in the way of a short story that is worthy of being read in

Ted's class. -4-

Play Production is three-credits. Miss Moore gives us lectures on "Empathy" (which is developing the ability to identify so fully with a character in a play that you practically become that character). It is also getting a feeling for the interaction of characters so that you comprehend the intricate relationships that make the dramatic structure. Then we have to empathize with our audience in order to remember always that we are not putting on the play in a vacuum but must

be aware of how our slightest intonation of voice or gesture (Miss Moore calls this "body language") can provoke an audience response.

She also assigns each one of us a play to study and make a prompt copy showing the stage setting (doors, windows, and props including furniture); then we have to map out the action of the play, showing where characters enter and exit and their physical relationship to each other in every scene. She warns against staging all the action at stage center. There must be interesting movement that bears a relation to the dramatic development. Somebody at the front of the stage normally has a dramatic advantage over somebody farther back, unless for some reason the director wants and is able to gain a kind of surprise ironic force by giving the spotlight to the person farther back. For example, the person up front can sit down whereas the one farther back remains standing. Or the one in front can speak quietly while the one in back raises his voice. Or the electric spotlight can pick out the person in back.

For the play assigned to us we have to mock up a small book, showing how the action progresses through each scene from the beginning of Act I to the end of the play. She makes us realize that "scene" means not just what is labeled a "scene" by the playwright, but that every act is really made up of interworking segments, progressing toward a total effect for each "scene" and each act, and for the whole play. You have to be on the alert for the interaction -- not to lose sight of the

whole play by overconcentrating on parts of it, or by overconcentrating on the total effect to lose sight of the smallest part.

I had never thought of any of this before.

Boz, her young assistant from Simmons, comes to speak to us on designing a setting, and on appropriate lighting. We all like him. Everything he says is practical. He's the one who is building the props and putting together the scenery. He is also a most interesting teacher, because he never gives anything like a formal lecture, but simply goes to the blackboard and makes a diagram to explain a point, and says, "Like such." His whole talk is a series of introductory statements followed by a diagram on the board and "Like such." He is such a handsome fellow all the girls are crazy about him but he puts a crimp in their infatuation by taking a trip back to Boston to spend a weekend with his wife and just-born baby.

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A couple weeks along we have a play put on by a traveling company of professionals who stage "The School for Scandal." They burst in on our class one afternoon and start hammering on the stage, setting up scenery and making a general racket. They have everything down to clockwork but make an awful lot of noise, not minding if their voices drown out Miss Noore and her class sitting way over in back of the auditorium. I get so interested in watching that Miss Moore embarrasses me by having to speak to me about paying some attention to what she is

saying. But the voice of one of the young actors has especially attracted me. He is a lithe, wiry fellow, above medium height with shining blonde hair and a voice that is very masculine, yet like that of John Israel Smith, has in it a drawling tag of effeminacy. He seems to be mocking everything the stage director is telling them. I am fascinated by him.

I don't have a cent to pay for a ticket, so that evening can only catch glimpses from outside the little theatre. The men wear tight breeches and bright colored coats with lace coming out of the ends of their sleeves, and powdered wigs; and the women are in great skirts and bouffant hairdresses and little stars or moons accenting the pallor of their cheeks. That same special young man has a male lead, and I try as hard as I can to keep my eyes and ears peeled for him whenever he is on stage. I wish I were seated up front in the front row where I could really get an eyeful. I get absolutely absorbed in him. I go around to their dressing room and try to catch sight of him changing his clothes but through the window all I can see is such a bustle of moving bodies tossing in and out of their costumes that I give up, and go back to kibitzing what I can see from the back lawn looking up the center aisle of the darkened theatre.

It is tantalizing but exasperating.

After the performance I hang around near the dressing room for a half hour hoping to catch the attention of my favorite, but no luck. Finally, I give up and go back upstairs in the Inn

and forget the play because I am itching. I strip and go across the hall to the shower, but both showers are engaged. I can hear two men shouting across the partition to one another. One voice is that of Denham Dearborn, a young teacher from Chicago who shares a room across the hall from mine and Greg Eastman's. The other voice is not Denham's roommate's. They are talking about the play, and I realize that the second voice is unmistakably that of the young actor I am interested in.

He shouts above the drumming of water: "I don't know what I would have done if you hadn't come to my rescue."

Denham shouts back: "The luck is all mine. I'm bored to hell here."

I am standing there, propping the shower room door part open, when I hear the sound of a shower turned off and a curtain being snapped open. I back out quickly and return to my room.

For a while there's a hubbub of voices from across the hall, first in the shower room then from Denham's room. They soon go noisily downstairs.

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I go back for my shower, letting the boiling water seep over my itch, while I'm putting an arm or a leg under the direct spray, or my ass or my elbow, an ankle, or high on my back under my collar bone where I can't reach. I luxuriate in the hot, tingling sensation that for a second or two drives away the sting of poison ivy. Then, realizing I can't spend the night

here, I return to my room and have gone to sleep by the time Greg comes in.

The next day I'm itching so much I catch a ride downtown with our campus mailman and go across the street from the postoffice to the office of Dr. Brent, who used to be our doctor for giving us physicals when I was running cross country. I itch so I am nearly desperate. The doctor's secretary hears the story of my poison ivy and says the doctor is with a patient, but he has had a cancellation and if I can stick around she will put me in that slot. I ask her how much it will cost and she says, "Probably ten dollars," which is about all I've been holding onto for an emergency. I decide this infernal itching has got me about to the end of my rope.

Dr. Brent is the same commonsensible back country family doctor I remember. I remind him that I used to come to see him with the cross country team. He looks at my hands, and says, "I've never seen a worse case. You really got into it, didn't you?"

He looks at the little red bumps between my fingers. "Have you got it anywhere else?"

I take off one shoe and sock, and he says, "I see. It seems to run right up your ankle."

He wants to see the other foot, and I show him. I don't show him my buttocks or genitals.

I say, "It's even way up on my back under my shirt collar."

He takes a look at places I have been unable to see. I get a sort of pleasure from feeling like an unusual specimen being examined by a professional.

He says, "Poison ivy is peculiar. It doesn't always yield easily to treatment."

I say, "It's worse for me because I wait on table and I have to be handling all those hot dishes and exposing my hands, and explaining I have poison ivy and it's not catching."

He writes out a prescription. "Take that over to the drugstore. If it doesn't help, come back to see me."

He is very sympathetic. Perhaps it's because he remembers me from when Coach Brown used to send the team in to see him. The examination hasn't taken long. To my relief he charges only five dollars.

The druggist supplies me with a bottle of pink liquid that looks like what Dr. Newton gave us kids years ago when we got into poison ivy.

I catch a ride back to Bread Loaf, and take a hot shower and dose myself here and there all over with the pink stuff. For a few minutes it seems to ease the itch, but by the time I have to wait table for dinner, my hands are red and burning again. I'm glad people have stopped noticing so I don't have to keep explaining it's not catching.

I guess you can get used to anything. After awhile I seem to be able to concentrate on my courses and my work without my summer being entirely spoiled.

Ted Morrison's course in verse form has only a dozen students. I find it fascinating because I'm trying to write poems, and seem to have a lot of trouble finding something to write about. Perhaps if I can get interested in form it will help me find something to say. Anyway I am fascinated. He talks a lot about "prosody," which seems to mean the science of verse form. it seems that every different language has its uniqueness from the Greeks to the Romans to the classical French and the early and late English. The great English form is iambic, and Robert Bridges wrote a book Milton's Prosody that is on reserve for us in the library, and he wrote a long poem called The Testament of Beauty trying to illustrate his thesis that in English poetry you have to pay attention not only to the accents but the weight of the syllable as if there is a kind of quantitative element in poetic rhythm. A long syllable, simply because it takes up more time, makes its effect felt whether or not it is accented. You take a line like:

Of man's first disobedience and the fruit
you have to notice the difference between the slight physical bulk of the first syllable Of and the larger. more bulky, next two: man's first. So you dwell on the second and third syllables longer because pronouncing them takes more time, and then you come to a whole batch of short syllables in dis o bed ience, which is a longer word in Time, but you are tempted to pass over its short syllables quickly and then halt briefly on

ience even though it means nothing by itself and isn't accented. In fact you have speeded up on the three preceding short syllables so much that you don't linger on the whole word, except to strike an accent on bed. And then you come to the meat of it: and the fruit, where you are really slowed up. In the important word disobedience -- which is balanced against and the fruit --there's a relation between quantity and meter because the second syllable o is both short and unaccented whereas the third syllable is longer in bulk and is accented, and the fourth and last syllable, while long in bulk is not accented. It is possible to skip over the two first short syllables in disobedience and accent the third and skip over the fourth, and that leaves two accents for the very important "and the fruit" as if you are adding together through the linking word and two important ideas disobedience (man's universal sinning through Adam's fall) and his salvation through Jesus's sacrifice of himself to save mankind) and the fruit. The word and becomes accented as if a child is saying, "I want an apple and a cookie." So the entire two great Miltonic epics -- in a sense, if you pay attention to accent and quantity -- are foreshadowed in the first line.

I make a private reservation that metre is not absolute but relative partly to the whim of the reader, who may hold in his mind more than one possibility, or change his mind from time to time. For example, in that first line of "Paradise Lost," it is possible to play around with having different accents without

sacrificing iambic pentameter. The accent could fall on both man's and first and skip along in the word "disobedience," putting the accent only on bed then going on to accent "and the fruit."

Of man's first dis o bed ience and the fruit.

Or you could accent either man's or first (but not both of those words) and have an accent on dis and bed and both the linking word and and the word fruit. What you do makes slight differences in meaning but keeps a basic interpretation allowing for hesitations or speedings up in the sound. At the line's end, I can hardly conceive of not accenting both and and fruit. On the other hand, if the mind is flexible, you could still keep the meaning while accenting "obedience" twice. Like this:

Of man's first disobedience and the fruit

Or only once like this:

Of man's first disobedience and the fruit.

In addition to this, there is something called counterpoint between accent and quantitative form. We get some of this in Ted's first lecture, which he seems to present to us as something very difficult which is nearly beyond comprehension.

I'm not sure how much I understand but I have a feeling of intuiting Ted's main point that the science of English prosody is complex and the main thing is to remember that good poetry is not a little jelly fish of syllables brought together through imagery and syntax, but there must be a solid aesthetic comprehension of the importance of form by means of accent and

quantity. So that you have always a metrical theory to hold the poem together.

Since, up to now, most of my poems have been little jelly fish of emotion and imagery, this new approach really gives me something to think about, even though I don't think I am ready to practice it.

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For the moment, I am tied up trying to work through a short story for creative writing seminar. I have latched onto a story Mom told me about herself when she was a young girl and took her first job. She heard that Mr. Buckmaster, owner of the store in North Leverett, across from Gramp's sawmill, needed a housekeeper. In fear and trembling she went down and applied and was accepted. She had to go there to live a whole week at a time. It was the first time she had been away from home. She would get board and room and three dollars a week and have Saturday afternoon and Sunday free for herself.

It is the first time since Mom died I have been able to think of her. The little story comes to me in her own words.

"I worked hard Satdy morning getting the house dusted and swept and a stew made to put in the ice box and a frosted cake in the pantry to last over Mr. Buckmaster for the weekend. I was really pretty scared of him because I never worked out before, and he had the name for being a tough customer and a pinchpenny so I wanted nothing to go wrong.

"Come twelve o'clock I had milk gravy and toast made for his lunch, and a custard pudding, the leftover of which could go in the icebox to go with the cake for Satdy night supper.

"Anyway, I was ready for him, and was standing on one foot and then the other, watching through the window for him to come over from the store. Finally I saw him come out of the store and shut and lock the door and put the key in his pocket, and look up and down the street and then cross over, looking very satisfied with himself.

"I got out of the way for him to come over, hang his coat in the hall, and come into the kitchen to wash his hands at the sink and dry them on the handtowel next to my dishtowel.

"He wanted to know what was for lunch, and I told him toast and milk gravy and custard pudding. He seemed satisfied, at least didn't say anything to the contrary.

"It took him for ever and a day to get his plate clean of his second helping of toast and milk gravy. I watched him help himself to the custard, which I was proud of because I made it through Momma's recipe and, if I do say so, it had collected into itself and held together, nothing to be ashamed of. He smacked his lips.

"Then he took out his watch and looked at it, put it back into his vest pocket. And reached out his handkerchief and blew his nose long and loud. Finally he reached into his pocket and laid on the table his wallet and beside it his deerskin coin purse with a leather thong drawn tight at the mouth.

"He reached into his wallet and one to one counted out three dollar bills and laid them beside his plate. Then he fumbled at his purse and put it back in his pocket as if he had no use for it.

"Then he cleared his throat and said, 'Mertie,' and I went in and cleared the table and carried the dishes to the kitchen sink and put them in the dishpan ready to wash and scald them from the teakettle of hot water I had ready on front of the stove. I washed the dishes and put them away.

"I could hear him get up and go to the hall, and come back to the table. When I peeked in he had the Greenfield Recorder spread out in front of him. I was afraid it would take him all afternoon to get through it, but he called me in, and said, 'It was a satisfactory lunch, Mertie, and I have been satisfied with your work. And now I suppose you want your pay and want to get on back to the Corner. As you see, I have three dollars laid out here on the table.' He took up each bill and fingered each, one at a time, and laid it down again with its neighbors.

"Instead of giving them to me, he gave me a squinty, offslant look and said, 'I doan know how it is with you but I doan suppose you young folks give a whang about helping your folks out of their pickles. Your paw is a good man, and he may have forgot it, but he has been owing me three dollars for a long time, now. I doan suppose you want to be good for it out of your pay.'

"I knew the old skinflint was lying. We always did our trading at Watson's store in Moores Corner. So far as I knew Pop never in his life went all the way down to North Leverett to trade. What reason would he have to? Watson's store was bigger and better, and from all I'd ever heard about it, cheaper. I thought Mr. Buckmaster was taking advantage to swindle me out of my pay. I just stood there and didn't say anything. But I was feeling mad, all the fuss and feathers I'd been to all week making him comfortable, getting his meals, making his bed, picking up after him. I spent all afternoon Friday cleaning the dust and cobwebs out of his livingroom fireplace that hadn't been used in a month of Sundays he was too stingy to keep himself warm with a scrap of firewood.

"Anyway I knew he had to be lying. Pop said when I took the job I'd be lucky if I got my pay, but I trusted not to have anything like this happen.

"Finally, he histed himself up out of his chair, and put the three dollars back in his wallet and put it with his change purse back into his pants pocket. Then he took up his newspaper and folded it and went back in the hall and got into his jacket. He got all the way to the door, when he had a change of heart, though I guess it cost him some grief. He come back to the table, reached his purse out of his pants, unknotted the leather thong, and reached inside and felt around and came up with a silver dollar that he looked at, changed his mind, put it back and this time laid a fifty cent piece on the table.

"'There, I vum I guess you earned that much for your labor.'

"From the living room window I watched him cross the street, unlock the door of the store, and disappear inside. I was so mad I just sat there a half hour and sulked. Then I went back into the diningroom, grabbed the half dollar and threw it as hard as I could into the living room fireplace. I sat down and sulked some more. Then I thought better of it and spent the next hour and a half with a butcher knife working down between the crack between two bricks till I worked the fifty cents back up where I could get ahold of it."

That was the gist of the story as I remembered Mom telling it one time we were doing dishes together. Now I had to give it a beginning, middle and end, and make it over into a short story. I figured it was probably partly Mom's size that tempted that skinflint. As a grown woman she came only to my shoulder, and I suppose when she was sixteen she probably looked no more than a child, and it just worked against his grain for Mr. Buckmaster to bring himself to believe he had to pay his good money for such timid, no-account help, who didn't have the gumption to speak up for herself.

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Hortense Moore has given me a part in Thornton Wilder's The Long Christmas Dinner. It's another of those plays like A Happy Journey from Trenton to Camden that can get along with almost no props on a bare stage. We had an increasing number of straight

chairs and a table that could be increased in length as the family increased. I came on stage as a baby in a carriage and tottered off seventy years later an old man with a cane. I played it for laughs and got a lot of them.

In creative writing I passed in some lyrics already written before summer school. They were pretty loose free verse and Ted didn't care enough for them to have me read them. I felt pretty bad about it, because he and I were getting along very well in the course in Prosody.

I was working hard on the story about Mom, increasing the length by having her trudge the two miles home in summer heat feeling bad for herself. She told her mother how Mr. Buckmaster had swindled her. Gramma Briggs put the teakettle on front of the stove, removing the lid over the firebox, and went to the cupboard and came back with a teacup and saucer and her bowl of powdered camomile, and waited while Mertie sat at the table till the kettle was steaming, then poured her a cup of camomile tea. Then she had Mertie repeat over again the whole story.

Then she said, "Your father and I do our buying at Watson's Store. I'll have Elmer talk to you when he comes in from mowing away."

She sent Mertie upstairs to bed with a sick headache. After supper Grampa Briggs came up and told her he never owed Deacon Buckmaster a red cent, and she was never to go back to work for him: "If he's so stingy he can swindle you out of your measly three dollars, let him keep his money to hisself. Maybe

he will find a housekeeper his own age who will pin his ears back." Mertie felt real bad because it was her first working out and she had wanted to make good at it. At nightfall after Grampa left her, a sudden thunder shower came up to clear the air, and she could have a good cry and fall off to sleep.

The day before creative writing, I turned in my story to Ted Morrison. It didn't have a title. For a whole day I worried that Ted would think it worthless, but the next night, the first thing after he pulled a bunch of manuscripts out of his green baize Harvard sling-shoulder bag, he said, "I have something special tonight, a remarkable story by Lyle Glazier."

I was glad to have him read it, because he read better than I could.

Afterwards, the comments were favorable. Everybody was looking over at me. Later Ted handed back the manuscript, "It's first rate, Lyle, absolutely top notch. Have you thought of a title?"

I said, I was thinking of "A Time to Cry."

Thyra Vickery was waiting for me outside and we walked way up the Hancock road toward the top of the mountain. She could have an acid tongue but tonight she was gentle. I was so full up of emotion I could only spill it all out.

A week or so later, I was watching Ted play tennis with Charlie DuBois, and he stopped playing and came over, "Lyle, I'm still impressed with your story. You might send it off

somewhere to see what they think of it. The Atlantic might take a look at it."

Another week and he said, "If you have another story like that one, I'd like to take a look at it. I'm thinking of a grade for the course, and if you can come across with another story like that one, you would clinch a top grade."

As a matter of fact, I didn't seem to be able to match it, or come anything near it. I was pretty busy with rehearsing the Thornton Wilder play and reading up for the examination in Prosody, and trying not to be knocked out by poison ivy.

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The night before that exam, after I went to bed late, we had a terrific thunder storm. The air was filled with a tightening and a hush then a whoosh and roar of windstorm that crowded in over Bread Loaf. Suddenly the sky was full of lightning followed almost instantly by a roar of thunder, then lightning again. Flash followed on the heels of flash, with thunder so instant, I knew the whole fury of the storm was upon us. Greg Eastman had not come in and I'd left the door ajar against the stifling August heat, but now there was too much air. I could hear the rain coming, and jumped out of bed to close our dormer window. All the lights in the Inn and the outbuildings went out and we were in pitch dark except for the flashing followed by the crackle and crash of thunder. It was really glorious. I was buck naked there in the dark looking out

into the midnight storm that welcomed me as if taking me into it.

I could feel a presence in the dark room behind me, and then I could feel something. Then I heard the voice of Denham Dearborn speaking softly over my shoulder, "Are you afraid of the storm, Lyle?"

I started to face him, but stayed where I was. I could feel him touching me, not his whole length but down on my buttocks I could feel him barely touching. I relaxed my legs and hunched back and there was no doubt. I lost sight and sound of the storm raging outdoors. Denny was pressing closer, and I was letting him come up against me.

A shout came up the stairwell from downstairs, someone down there in the dark shouting for a candle. Denny drew back and I pulled around him and into bed, afraid somebody would come upstairs in on us. After a minute Denny was kneeling beside me, and turning down the covers, and I let him. His mouth was on me. I put my hand on his shoulder. He was bare. In no time it was over and I was curled back in bed my covers over me and he was gone. Some time later I woke up when Greg slipped into the room and undressed in the dark and got into his bed.

It was the end of summer school, and I was staying on for the writers' conference to wait on table. Ted Morrison, the Director, invited me. After the exam in Prosody, the next day, he told me, "Lyle, you really cracked that opening essay on ambiguity, accent and quantity."

There are five days between the close of summer school and the opening of the Conference. Dennie is going to Boston for the weekend and has a ride all the way with the Smithfields, who teach at Framingham Normal and have agreed to swing into Boston and drop him off on the way. He wants me to go with him, and I agree to, although I am still itching like the devil, and my clothes are dirty. I've worn every stitch a dozen times over and have no money for sending anything to a laundry.

I put on my corduroys and my cleanest shirt and throw my Middlebury sweater over my shoulders. Denny is in a clean shirt and tie, a pair of clean pressed slacks and a featherlight jacket. He and I ride in the rumble of their Chevy convertible. All the way we are leaning forward while, mostly Denny, is carrying on a conversation with the Smithfields. He is a teacher in Chicago and is telling them about a school citywide bankruptcy, and how the teachers even this long after the stockmarket crash are getting a chit instead of a check, and have to try to find a bank broadminded enough to redeem it. Denny is a great conversationalist and tells his story well. We are both leaning forward from the rumble toward the front seat. All the time he is busy telling his story, his right hand is busy down out of sight where he has my corduroys laid open. He never brings me to a climax, but keeps bringing me to the edge of it. I keep my own hands in plain sight on the folded-back canvas top of the roadster and pull away from him down there

when I have to. It is as if the top of me has no inkling of what is happening to me down out of sight of the Smithfields.

I have never seen Boston. When the city spreads out before us, Don Smithfield asks, "Where to?" and Denny says, "If you can, aim for North Station. I have a reservation at the Manger."

When Don asks where I want to be put down, Denny cuts in quickly, "We are having dinner together."

The Manger turns out to be a medium tall, grimy building almost under the shadow of the station. Denny lifts out his bags, the Smithfields drive off with shouts of goodwill, and we turn toward the entrance, Denny taking the lead. As a bellhop comes for the bags, I notice a sign propped in a bay window, "Rooms for Parties." At the front desk, I hang back with the bellboy while Denny registers for us both. For dinner we have the blueplate special at the station. I am almost too worked up to eat. Upstairs after showers we go to bed early. It is the first time I have ever had a grown man's cock in my mouth, but I am ready for it when Denny pushes my head down. In fact, all night long I am after him until along toward morning, he whispers, "Lyle, I'm going to have dinner and overnight with my friend, a Reader at the First Church in Boston, and if you don't let up on me, I won't be worth a nickel."

In the morning I let him buy my breakfast in the station coffee shop, and I'm on the road hitchhiking back to Bread Loaf.

Book II.06WICKED...and Spotless as the Lamb

Chapter Six

-1-

I have the good luck to be one of two waiters invited to wait on staff table. There are a lot of important staff members. Bernard DeVoto is a historian of the West who is teaching at Harvard and has written a book on Mark Twain's America. He is almost always late for evening lecture, having lingered at Treman Cottage for one more drink. In fact, one problem for us waiters is to get staff fed and out of the diningroom after dinner so we can clean up and get to the lecture in time for Ted Morrison's introduction to the featured speaker.

-2-

Among other staff we get to know Padraic Colum, an Irish Playwright, whose wife is a ballet dancer. A quiet man, he lectured on the Irish Renaissance and on plays now being featured on Broadway -- Eugene O'Neill for instance, and Dead End by Sidney Kingsley. He called Mourning Becomes Electra "Romantic Symbolism" whereas Dead End is stark "Realism." One looks deep into the soul and the other draws its power from dramatizing external economic and political forces that determine the character and destinies of the Dead End Kids. Colum pointed out also that the theater with its props of

scenery and dramatic action is one step toward realism. James Joyce's stream of consciousness must gain all its effects from the power of language, but O'Neill's play has theatrical props to help explain it as well as a program prepared to guide the audience through the main psychological themes of the play. Mr. Colum used as an analogy the difference between watching Shakespeare with the props of modern stage realism and what it must have been like to see, for example, Hamlet, when everything had to be spelled out by Shakespearian language as interpreted by the Elizabethan equivalent of a great actor like Gielgud.

-3-

For the waiters one of the most popular daytime lecturers is Edith Merrilees on the short story and novel. A long drawnout effervescent woman, and not at all a nightlife boozier like Bernard DeVoto, her lectures are cannon bursts, one insight after another. She will be lecturing on "means of perception" (which means the bird's eye viewpoint adopted to tell a story) and suddenly she will have shifted to "Time in fictional narrative." She warns against "static narrative" that gets bogged down on a moment and never moves from that center: concentration on a moment of time can be effective in the hands of a master like James Joyce, but she warns against it for the beginner. Don't use Joycean stream of consciousness unless you are willing to fall flat on your face. Then she talks about a new novel, Thomas Wolfe's Of Time and the River, which she

praises as owing its success to the flow of time like a great river in this novel which is very close to autobiography.

-4-

The next night in an evening lecture, Bernard DeVoto took a swipe at Thomas Wolfe's new novel, which he finds too complex and, if anything, too personal. He told a story about Wolfe's being asked by his editor to cut some pages from a scene that runs on for a hundred pages, and in a couple of days Wolfe handed him another sheaf of two hundred pages that he added to that scene instead of cutting it. If it hadn't been for his editor, DeVoto said, Of Time and the River would never have been published, because Wolfe would never have left it alone. It raises the question, DeVoto said, whether credit for the novel should go to its author or its editor.

By this time, I have heard enough about this young teacher of composition at New York University that I am fiercely partisan without ever having read a word of his book. At a bull session after the lecture, I try to set the argument to rest by saying that if the editor at Scribner's deserves credit for the book, why doesn't he simply go out and write his own book? I know that as soon as I have time I am going to start reading Of Time and the River -- or maybe Look Homeward, Angel first.

-5-

Besides the regular staff there were always guest lecturers invited for an evening lecture because they were celebrities from having had a book on the best seller list -- like Gladys

Hasty Carroll, whose As the Earth Turns, published two years ago, has caught fire and is still hanging on. She is a quiet little housewife from Southeast Maine, who would strike you as a member of the garden club and Fortnightly Society until you discover she is a famous novelist. She is altogether different from Julia Peterkin, a southern novelist, whose Scarlet Sister Mary was published earlier and won a Pulitzer Prize. When she joins the staff for dinner, you would never make the mistake of taking her for a Sunday School teacher.

-6-

Besides the Conference staff and teachers, there were always people dropping up for a lecture and being hailed by the staff and brought over to staff table, and we have to set a plate for them. Like Charlotte Moody, who used to be in charge of Doubleday in London, and knows all the gossip even though she is no longer in publishing. I wish I could overhear half what she says. I come back from getting dessert for Padraic Colum who arrived on time, and find Charlotte and Bernard DeVoto just arrived at table and trading stories, and, try as I can, I always am sent back to the kitchen and miss the punch line. In fact, Bennie, as they (and we in private) call him, caught sight of me leaning over to catch one of the hot stories, and hushed Charlotte: "These young whippersnappers are better than we are. Our stories aren't fit for their ears." I was really indignant.

-7-

Besides waiting on table, I have the job of keeping the auditorium clear of rubbish. There are signs warning of no smoking and "Put loose trash in a rubbish container." Even so, I am walking the aisles after a lecture, grabbing handfuls of cigaret butts and scrap paper dropped carelessly or accidentally on purpose. And every night after the Guest Lecture, I have the job of moving all the chairs forward a row at a time to sweep under them, and then moving them back in place as I proceed toward the front. It could be a big job except I make a science of it, and, after the first time, never again make the mistake of trying to move all the chairs to the back while I sweep the front, and then moving them front while I sweep the back. Then I have to set the whole hall up again in rows. It took me half the night that time. I'm still grateful for George Lee at the Tool Shop for having taught me something about sizing up the time-saving, most-efficient way to handle a job before I tackle it.

-8-

Soon after I started sweeping the back of the main hall, one of the conference goers, a young fellow physically rugged from the hips up, riding in a wheel chair, got pushed by a stunning young woman into the side extension of the main hall underneath the attic space devoted to storing scenery. They entered the side door, paying no attention to me. She placed the wheel chair under a pull chain hanging down from a ceiling panel. The young man hunched forward in the chair, and by climbing up behind him

and standing tiptoe, she just managed to reach the metal ring of the pullchain and lower the panel. Concealed on the topside was a ladder that slid on a track. With her help he heaved himself up, she pushing behind, leaving the panel and ladder hanging down. It was still hanging there when I put out the lights and locked the doors for the night. In the morning when I checked, everything was shipshape, the ceiling panel snugly fitted back in place, the ladder out of sight.

-9-

Robert Frost gave his usual reading, which always begins with a long chatty country-farmer discourse on poetry and ordinary living. You would think he was just an old country farmer except his subject is poetry, and he counts on everybody's knowing it. After he talked for a half hour somebody yelled, "Read 'Birches.'" He looked confused, "I don't have a book. Can anybody lend me a copy?"

One of the middleaged or elderly poetry addicts always has Collected Poems and is flattered to think that for the rest of her life she will be able to tell her backhome Poetry Society that Robert Frost read out of this very book at Bread Loaf in 1935. Tonight one of them trotted forward, and Frost leaned down from the stage and thanked her and went back to the podium, and, wetting a finger, leafed through the pages till he came to the poem, and started reading in a half hesitating but enormously controlled voice:

When I see birches bending left and right

across the line of straighter, darker trees...

He interrupted his reading, staring down at the page: "It says here, 'Symbolism...light versus dark, night versus day, hope versus despair, scepticism versus faith...'"

He scratched his head as if entertaining deep thoughts for the first time, then looked quizzically toward the lender, and everybody's eyes followed his to the lady squirming in her chair.

I like to think some boy's been swinging them...

He brought the book toward his face, then lowered it still looking down, studying it. "It says, 'Innocence...experience...a little child shall lead them.'"

He let up on the lady and went on reading, letting the poem have its say. I think I have never been so close to Greatness, pure and undefiled. I will be able to go to Mount Hermon having sat at the feet of the Great American Poet of our Day.

-10-

The next night, we were lectured on Modern Poets by Louis Untermeyer, who made a pilgrimage from the City to interview his favorite poet. As well as from Frost, he read poems by Vachel Lindsay, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Carl Sandburg and a host of others including Jean Starr Untermeyer.

Toward the end of the discussion period from the back of the room, a matron rises, cleared her throat, and protested in a very controlled, nonconciliatory voice, "Mr. Untermeyer, I have a question. You have been reading beautiful poems, and have

introduced us to a great many poets, but why have you failed to mention America's greatest living poet?"

Untermeyer looked puzzled. "Please enlighten me. I can't answer your question unless you inform me. What great poet have I insulted?"

The lady straightened full height, "Mr. Untermeyer, I am speaking of Mr. Edgar Guest."

"Oh, Eddie Guest. He's not a poet, he's one of America's six leading industries."

-11

After the Conference, I am lucky to have a ride back to Greenfield with the father of Emory Hebard, a Beta Kappa undergraduate at Middlebury, who waited on table for the summer school and stayed on for the conference. I learn now that his father is superintendent of schools in Florence, northwest of Northampton. Partly because he is Beta Kappa, Emory has made an idol of me. He heard the talk about my short story and witnessed my success as the baby growing by leaps and bounds into a grandfather in that play by Thornton Wilder. I never paid any particular attention to Emory, but now, rather diffidently, he told me he and his dad will be driving right back through Greenfield and there will be plenty of room in the car, and he wonders if I have any other way of going home.

There's a bad moment, when Emory brings me to his father's car and introduces me as his friend who will be teaching at Mount Hermon. Mr. Hebard was by no means pleased and showed it.

"I brought our fishing tackle and thought you and I could have a weekend in New Hampshire. I was looking forward to it."

I'm standing there with my canvas laundry bag crammed with dirty laundry, and a box of books at my feet, and my tennis racket in my hand in its wooden carrier frame. I have five dollars in my pocket from a collection the Conference took that morning as an honorarium to be pooled by us waiters and waitresses. I am wearing my best pants (my dirty white flannels) and my cross country M sweater is over my shoulders. I have more luggage than I can conveniently carry as a hitch hiker. I have been counting on this lift. Emory is obviously filled with guilt. His father is angry. We stand there checkmated by each other. Finally Mr. Hebard humps into the driver's seat, Emory opens the back door to me, and I climb in, then get out, for there isn't room for my laundry bag. Emory asks his father for the key to the trunk and I stow away the laundry bag, and get back into my cramped space. It is a long and strained trip with Emory trying to keep up chatter with me against the hostility of his father. I am still embarrassed when they set me down at Melvin's father-in-law's place on Maple Street in Greenfield. I hadn't had the nerve to ask Mr. Hebard to turn off route 5 at Bernardston to drive five miles out of their way to let me out at Mount Hermon. Mr. Hebard is obviously glad to be rid of me. He hasn't said a word whether he still hopes to salvage any of the fishing trip by swinging back to New Hampshire. If so, the side trip to Hermon could have put them on the nearest route to Hinsdale, but

I didn't have nerve to suggest it. Now, it's only when they are well out of sight I realize I forgot to get my canvas bag full of dirty clothes out of the trunk. I'll have to send a note to Florence asking them to mail it, if they will. Fortunately, I left most of my things at Melvin's on Highland Avenue in Northfield before going to Bread Loaf.

-12-

Clayton has married Abbie French, Georgia and Ruth's sister, a tiny girl, no taller than Mom. He has stopped working at Northfield Inn and got a job in the stockroom at the Tool Shop. They are living in an apartment above the drugstore at the corner of Main Street and Parker Avenue, the street that turns down to the CV Station and along to the flatland along the River bottom. They've invite me to come stay with them any time. They will drive over and pick me up at Mount Hermon. They don't have a phone, but give me the number of the pay phone in the drugstore, where I can leave a message and they will drive over to get me. They are after me to come see them real soon.

Book II.07WICKED...and Spotless as the Lamb

Chapter Seven

-1-

Wednesday afternoon I met Jim Covell, teacher of French, who has the southeast room on the third floor next to the floor officer. A tall man with a beautiful physique, he has a dark complexion and a thin handhewn face like an American Indian. He's new this year, just graduated from Brown. He will be my faculty assistant. When I went up again to talk to him Thursday afternoon, his door was open and he was sitting on the floor in the lotus position contemplating some distant point in time, oblivious to my presence.

I went down to the first floor and knocked on the door of Coach Henderson, who will be my backup assistant. I've been told he and his wife have a small apartment suitable for housekeeping, so I will not be seeing them at Commons. I had no reply. I hear voices but nobody comes. I began to think they were deliberately ignoring my knock. Finally I hear footsteps and a muscular man throws open the door with his mouth open as if ready to explode. Back in the room a small blonde woman stares at me, her hair tight curled as if fresh from a hair dresser. Her husband flexes his muscle.

"What do you want?"

I say, "I'm Lyle Glazier, the new housemaster."

"Oh. I thought you were a student."

He introduced me to his wife. They didn't invite me in.

He said, "I've had a rough day at the gym organizing schedules and gear for Friday classes."

When I left, I heard him snap the lock on the door.

At dinner I spotted Jim Covell three tables away in the great diningroom at the top of the hill between South Crossley and the house of Headmaster Porter. Jim was gone before I could speak to him.

-2-

Thursday night when the floor officers bring their bedchecks at nine-thirty, everybody is accounted for, each student in his room except three coming on Friday. The four officers bring their roommates. From upstairs and all around all evening there's been a racket of doors slamming, radios blaring, voices raised.

I ask what is going on. The Chief floor officer -- Hank Spears from the top floor -- explains that this is the half hour free time before lights out. He and his roommate are obviously athletes and from their manner big men on campus. All eight are very friendly. I ask if it's the custom to have bedcheck at the beginning of free time, and suggest that starting tomorrow they turn in their reports after the half hour of freedom, when it's time for lights out.

They explain that that's not the way it is done.

I suggest they try my proposal.

Bill Craig, the little fellow on my floor, asks if I've been down to the basement to look at the new assembly room for South Crossley. He says it's brand new. It's the first time I've heard of it.

Tom Eastman, on the third floor tells me, "After study hour we floor officers and our roommates go down to the basement showers in Center Crossley for a half hour to meet with the officers from Center and North Crossley. Last year Mr. Hartley came with us. Want to come?"

"No thank you. I'll stick around here."

It takes a long time for the dormitory to quiet down. All four floors are like a great bee hive. At ten fifteen I walk up and down stairs to check whether the floor officers are in their rooms. They are back from the basement. I ask them to make another bedcheck and report to me. The hubbub begins to die down. The second bedcheck reports everybody in his room and all lights out. But doors are still slamming. I gather there's a rush on the johns midway along the halls on each floor. It's well after eleven before it quiets down. I sit there trying to figure out what to do.

When it's finally quiet, I walk down to the basement to look at the assembly room, directly under Coach Henderson's apartment. It's a long narrow room with no windows and new furniture -- a leather upholstered couch, half a dozen leather easy chairs and a dozen or so racked-up footstools and a dozen

assorted straight chairs. With luck, perhaps all hundred boys in the dormitory could be squeezed in. We could hold a meeting of South Crossley. But I have to be careful and go slow. We can't possibly have the crazy house we had tonight, but we'll see how it is after they have their first classes. I have to work through the floor officers. If I go over their heads and start ordering the boys around, I will have everybody against me. We'll ride out the weekend and see how it looks when they have had time to settle in at the beginning of next week.

-3-

I've been so preoccupied with South Crossley I've hardly time to think about my two classes, both meeting on Friday. My sophomores are beginning with Stevenson's TREASURE ISLAND. I have a roomful of kids who are eager to get started. They are not at all surprised when I take Louis Smith's advice to warn them at the very first class they'll be expected to master Woolley's 221f and 221g on the use of the comma with independent and dependent clauses.

My class in Advanced Grammar is a humdinger. I sense almost immediately that it's full of deadbeats who failed the course last year and others are there because they failed English composition. They have compounded a grievance and are ready for me and start asking questions from chapters at the end of the book.

-- "What is a deferred object?"

"-- a compound predicate?"

"...a conjunctive adverb?"

I had thought I knew grammar from six years of Latin, but to their glee I stumble over answers. I'm stumped with jargon and their piled up indignation. It's as if they have ambushed this novice instructor to get revenge for the ridicule they have suffered. They positively jump for joy at my confusion. Here indeed I am facing what Dr. Adams used to call "an incipiently disorderly class."

Back at my office, in sheer emotional retreat I try to check mounting blood pressure. I leaf through the textbook and catch an inkling how I've been defeated by vocabulary rather than knowledge. I've got to get a handle on this cursed book. I call the number in the drugstore in Northfield and leave a message for Clayt and Abbie to come pick me up Saturday evening at 11:00, and carry me back to their apartment for overnight, breakfast and Sunday dinner. I manage to get hold of Jim Covell and ask him to come get acquainted with the floor officers when they bring their Friday night bedchecks. I have to downplay this emergency. I'm making a routine visit to my brother and his bride. I'll be gone only a few hours Saturday, when they can make their reports to Jim.

In the tiny kitchen I stay up till 2:00 a.m. studying the text and get a grip on myself. I realize how familiar all these distinctions are. It was the language that defeated me. After breakfast, and in early afternoon after Sunday dinner I read every scrap of A PRACTICAL ADVANCED GRAMMAR. I'm back at Hermon

for Sunday night supper. Monday afternoon I confound my confounders by firing questions that display the vacuum of understanding underlying their carefully prepared inquisition. I don't grind their faces in the muddle of their ignorance, but sympathize with their plight and assure them how easy it's going to be to rid themselves of their grammatical difficulties if they will follow the simple steps I'm preparing to carry them from what they already know to what they need to know. I assure them their problem is not congenital inability to master English grammar but simply a failure of method.

-4-

Having got out from under my worry over losing control of Advanced Grammar, I can put my mind to the fact that Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday nights we might as well not have had study hour. The two hours and a half were bedlam. At Monday bedcheck, I detain the floor officers and their roommates. I bring up the subject of how we can possibly have a study hour with radios blaring, doors slamming, loud voices and boys tramping from room to room for bull sessions with their friends.

I get an unexpected assist from Hank Spears, who blurts out the information that all over campus last year South Crossley had the reputation of being the Country Club of Mount Hermon.

"Last June nobody wanted to room here. Students avoided signing up for rooms because of our bad reputation. A lot of our students are new boys crammed in here by Art Platt."

I say, "We can't continue to have the confusion we've been having. The entire two hours and a half of study hour is a travesty.

"Tomorrow night I want each of you floor officers to walk your corridor and see to it that every boy comes immediately to the new common room in the basement. For one thing most of them probably haven't even heard that we have a common room."

I tell them we're going to have to have rules. We can't have the blare of radios and slamming of doors and general visiting around during study hours.

"I need your cooperation. If you floor officers and your roommates can set the pace, we can settle our problem in short order. If we don't do it now at the beginning of the year, we are licked. It's now or never."

-5-

Tuesday night by 7:30 we are all collected in the common room. We begin by each floor officer taking attendance for his floor. Everybody is there. I'm standing at a small table near the door. I say how glad I am to be their new housemaster. My door is always open to them. They can feel free to come to me with any problem.

I also say that I want them to understand that this is their common room. They can use it for informal gatherings or simply can come here any time they want a quiet place to be by themselves.

"Or, if you have a visitor from off campus or one of the other dorms, you can invite him here."

There's an immediate objection. "Mr. Glazier, we can't use the common rooms in North and Middle Crossley or in any of the other dormitories."

I say, "Think it over. Why should we be exclusive? Maybe if we extend our hospitality we can start a new trend at Mount Hermon."

We have considerable unheated discussion of whether to open up our common room to students from other dormitories.

Bill Craig says, "I don't think we want to just open up this room to any Tom, Dick, or Harry from all over campus. We might come in here and find somebody has vandalized our new furniture. But I think what Mr. Glazier is suggesting is something to think about if we invite a friend from Overton or one of the smaller dorms not as a regular thing but as a special occasion. As long as one of us is here, I think it might be a good thing."

The discussion goes on without reaching a conclusion.

I then introduce Hank Spears, Chief Floor Officer and have him stand for everybody to see, and then I introduce Tom Eastman on the third floor, Bill Craig on the second, and Fritz Emory on the first.

I say, "You'll be seeing a lot more of your floor officers than you will of me. They are my deputies. They make bedchecks

and in general are in charge of maintaining order each one on his floor."

I go on, "It's my duty to work for your good, but I'm not going to be a policeman. I've been talking to your floor officers about the lack of order in our study hours. The purpose of study hour is to provide a time for studying your lessons. It must be clear to everybody that it's very hard for anybody to do any real studying during study time as it is now. If we don't begin right now to tone up our study hour, we'll be in trouble the whole year. I'm going to lay down a few simple rules and ask the floor officers to help you observe them. Beginning right now when you go back upstairs, we will follow these rules:

"1. From 7:00 to 9:30 everybody will be in his room and stay in his room unless he has permission from the floor officer to leave it.

"2, No radios will be turned on.

"3. There will be no slamming of doors. All doors will be left open during study hour from 7:00 o'clock till 9:30.

"4. Anybody needing to go to the john will inform his floor officer, who will not give permission for more than one boy at a time.

"5. During study hours roommates can talk quietly within reason, but you should be reasonable and respect your roommate's right to do his homework. Try not to fall into the habit of using study hour for an extended bull session. Give your room-

mate a chance. Save unnecessary questions for free period between study hall and lights out."

I can feel tension rising. I'm glad I warned the floor officers ahead of time. None of them or their roommates say anything.

A big boy, who seems to be of some intellectual as well physical substance says quietly, "Mr. Glazier. That's not the way we hold study hour. It's not the way it's done at Mount Hermon. You are taking away our freedom."

I ask, "What about the freedom to study? What is the purpose of study hour?"

A more argumentative boy says sourly, "We don't like your rules."

I am lucky. I gather from the response on their faces that he's not one of their popular leaders. However, it's also clear that most of the boys agree partly with him and don't like the new rules.

I say, "Let's give them a try. Try going back upstairs, leaving your doors open, your radios off. If you have a question for your roommate, keep your voice down, or hold off till free period. Don't have lengthy conversations. If you want to go to the john, go to your floor officer to let him know. That way we can guard against lengthy conversations in the john. You may find that at the end of the marking period your grades have improved."

This has been my first real introduction to the dormitory. I think it a bad sign that nobody lingers to talk. They walk past without a smile or without stopping to say a word. They go back upstairs very quietly. After a while I make a point of going to the top of the stairs for a word on the third floor with Tom Eastman and on the fourth floor with Hank Spears, but I don't walk the corridors. So far as I can tell all doors are open and the rooms are quiet.

-6-

I've been so snarled up with getting started with classes and organizing South Crossley that for a time I could scarcely pay any attention to my itch except to scratch when it became unbearable. Every night after the dorm has been put to bed I take a walk out into the air and along the south edge of the pond into the woods. Then I come back, undress, put on my bathrobe, take towel and soap and toothbrush and toothpaste and pad down to the john midway along the hall for a luxurious hot shower. The itch is eased for a few minutes. And I'm so absolutely fagged from trying to keep the dormitory in shape that it doesn't take long to drop off to sleep.

I can hardly believe how the dormitory has settled down. I have left study hall in the hands of the floor officers. Not that I haven't paid strict attention, but I have held back from pacing the corridors. I have simply stayed in my room with my door open. When the floor officers turn in their bedchecks we haven't discussed the new rules. It's as if we can take them

for granted. I don't even allow myself to gnaw on the possibility of things going wrong. I know that down underneath in my mind there's a deephidden worry, but I don't bring it to the surface, and gradually I begin to realize I don't have to.

After a couple of weeks of real coolness, the boys begin to drop in to discuss homework or, in an emergency, to ask permission to make a phonecall home. More and more, somebody stops by just to chew the rag. As for the floor officers, it's as if they had been watching to see if I were able to deal with the problem and are grateful I spoke as I did. I would hate to think how it would be like if I hadn't.

A month on into early October one night I hear somebody coming upstairs around 9:30 and look up from reading TREASURE ISLAND for tomorrow's class, and see Dr. Porter coming in through my open door.

"Lyle, how are you? How are things going?"

I'm standing up and putting my book down. "Pretty good, I think, Dr. Porter."

"I'm not going to take much of your time. I have to see Gene Link in Middle Crossley, and I wonder if you will take me up to the third floor and use your key to let me through the fire door."

When we get out into the hall, it's so quiet, we stop talking. Up on the third floor, too, every door is open, there's a kind of hush of activity. It's my first journey, too, through study hall, and -- same as Dr. Porter is doing -- I'm

looking in through the open doors at the boys studying. He doesn't thank me just nods when I unlock the door and let him through, then shut and lock the door behind him.

When the first marking period is over and the boys get their grades some of them tell me they are doing better than they ever did before..

-7-

In West Hall, the huge dininghall, Dr. Porter presides at lunch over a table raised on a platform a foot or so above the level of the main floor. A member of the faculty leads everybody in prayer, then a student-body officer takes charge of daily announcements. Often the Headmaster takes the opportunity to address the whole school. I have been anxious because I know my turn is bound to come to eat lunch up there and lead prayer.

It's quite an experience to stand there at the podium and look out over that roomful of boys and their teachers gathered around the long tables stretching in front to left and to right. It's immense, a much greater space than the auditorium in the Post Office/ Campus Store building. The first time I stand up to say Grace, I don't let my eyes focus on anybody, just take in the general immensity of the room, and make it brief. I do have a good strong voice, and I don't hold back:

"Bless this food to our use, and us to Thy service. For Jesus' sake, Amen."

I have given some thought to it. I could have said, "For Christ's sake Amen!" It has crossed my mind that I could, but of course I don't."

Because I'm nervous, I find myself saying more than I'm supposed to. This is my first appearance before all these students. Maybe it's partly to prove to myself I'm not petrified. The words just leap out of my mind.

I say, "I'm the new housemaster in South Crossley. I thought I might mention that we have a new common room in the basement, and any of you are welcome to look in on it, if you want to ask one of our students to show you, or come up to my office on the second floor, and I'll show you."

That night when the floor officers turn in their bedchecks, Bill Craig says, "You made quite a sensation with your invitation. Nobody has ever said anything like that before, inviting boys from other dorms to come look at our common room. They really liked it."

I might have told him that if I'd had second thoughts I wouldn't have said it. But I don't. So far as I know we never had visitors. Nobody from another dorm ever came to my office and asked me to take them down cellar to see our common room. But I guess I didn't do too much damage.

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Since Larry lives down at Overton, where Bill Morrow is housemaster, I don't see much of him. But I try to keep my eyes and ears open. One day Dr. Porter and I are standing talking on

the south portico of the commons, when Head Coach Forslund comes over and says, "Lyle, your brother has the makings of a first class soccer player if he would be more aggressive. He's fast and has a wonderful instinct for keeping his eye on the ball and being exactly where he's needed, but he refuses to get in there and tangle. He will let himself be knocked over rather than use his knee or his elbow."

I say, "Maybe he chooses to play by the rules of the game."

Dr. Porter has been listening but says nothing.

A couple days later I meet Larry, who tells me the coach has given him a bad time, and he's leaving the soccer team and taking up wrestling with a part-time young coach from Greenfield. I'm proud of my little brother.

His English teacher is Mrs. Jackson, who was teaching at Mount Hermon and married her husband who was a history teacher. Now Mr. Jackson is Dean. After the first marking period I get a copy of Larry's grades that are mostly B's. Mrs. Jackson comes to me at dininghall after lunch and makes a point of giving me an oral report.

"Your brother is a nice little fellow. I enjoy having him in class. He never makes any trouble. I enjoy having him."

I make a point of passing this report on to Larry the next time I meet him. I worry about him even when I'm too busy to keep tabs on him, but I try to keep him presentable. I don't have much money to take care of my own clothes. I do have that

stiff coat-of-armor overcoat to keep me warm but my shoes, for example, are always run down at the heels.

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Along into November, Dr. Porter sends word that he hopes Gene Link from Middle Crossley and I will accept an invitation from Headmaster Boynton at Deerfield Academy for two Mount Hermom housemasters to come there and have lunch and look over their campus and see how they do business. I'm not enthusiastic about going but I know I have to. Gene has a car and drives us. We park near the great Administration/classroom building and, as we've been told, go to Headmaster Boynton's desk against the wall directly in front of the main door, where every student has to walk past several times a day.

Dr. Boynton tells us, "You see how I manage to keep my eyes open. I know every student personally by name and make a point of having something to say with every one of them at least once every day."

He goes on to give us a bit of advice about how to grow old without losing our stamina: "I have taught myself to take short naps on the spur of the moment. It's a matter of control and conditioning. Whenever I have a minute with nothing to do, I drop off to sleep and wake up refreshed as if I've had a full night's sleep. I recommend you try it."

It's a wealthy school. Every boy is well dressed and, so far as I can tell, has perfect manners and is perfectly adjusted emotionally and intellectually. To see them stop and have a

word with the Headmaster is a lesson in social decorum. Deerfield Academy is perfect. There are two young men, beautifully dressed, chatting as if by chance a short distance from the Headmaster's desk and Dr. Boynton calls them over. He introduces Gene and me to them, getting their names and our names right without a hitch. I get the opinion he knows everything about them.

I am attached to Mr. Featherstone, who takes me under his wing. We're going to have lunch together, and he'll give me a tour of the campus. As we approach his dormitory, he jumps ahead graciously and opens the hall door, then holds it for me, and remarks, looking down at my frayed pants cuffs and scuff-toed shoes, "At Deerfield, no Master is allowed to have runover heels."

Upstairs on the second floor, his apartment is perfectly appointed. There's a Steinway piano in his study and, as he tells me, a Bokhara rug on the floor. He doesn't offer to play for me, but I assume he was an infant prodigy, and studied under Boulanger.

That's what I learned about Deerfield Academy. On the way back to Mount Hermon I didn't even ask Gene his opinion, and I had precious little to report to Dr. Porter. I was everlastingly glad I was teaching at Hermon.

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I eat at one of the faculty/staff tables. Although I have this secret faith in my ability, the other teachers are older

and far more sophisticated in the social life of a great prep school like Mount Hermon. I am also a nervous teacher. No matter how well I have done at Middlebury and Bread Loaf, it seems to me that these English teachers, who have come from places like Bowdoin and Harvard and Yale have much more assurance than I. We never discuss literature at the table, and for that I'm grateful. I teach by a kind of osmosis. I don't go to our library and read what the critics and scholars have to say but travel through the book on my own steam. It means I don't carry to class any scholarly opinion, but I'm reading the book as the boys do. I'm lucky with Treasure Island because it's such an adventure. The boys share my experience of identifying with Jim Hawkins and cringing at his narrow escapes and trying with Jim to fathom and outwit the plots of Long John Silver. At first there's a lot of discussion whether Long John is a hero or a villain. It's a really exciting story all the way through, and it turns out the way we all want it to. Of course, I have to keep a chapter ahead and know a little more than they, but I don't spoil their experience by telling them what they're going to find out in tomorrow's reading.

The next book, Henry Esmond, gave them and me considerable trouble. Way back in high school I read Vanity Fair for outside reading and the intrigue and rhetorical irony confused me so much that I approached our second novel with a good deal of misgiving. The boys and I were both overwhelmed by historical and biographical data taking us beyond our depths. I might have

found some help if I had gone for assistance to Bill Morrow, the dean of our English faculty, or Mrs. Jackson or Bob Burdick, both of whom taught sophomores as I did, or even to Tom Donovan, the wit of our English department who with Louis Smith taught juniors and seniors as well as being our stage production wizard. However, it would never have occurred to me to admit my incompetence by seeking advice from my betters.

Bob Burdick, especially, might have helped. A scrupulously dressed dandy, his club foot gave him a limp that may have contributed to his shyness. At the faculty/varsity baseball game that fall, he was pitcher and shocked everybody. At the very end of the game, after acquitting himself well, he had limped to home plate where he fell down in an epileptic fit, frothing at the mouth, his limbs contorting. We all congregated to see until Dr. Pelham, our young resident physician, ordered the crowd to move back to provide air, and commandeered a stretcher for carrying Bob to the infirmary. For a week he was absent from West Hall and one night came back to dinner even more subdued. I think I never had more than a word with him. He was assistant master next door to the music building in one of our cottages where L'Hommedieu, our celebrated organist was housemaster.

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My closest companion after a time was Betty Woodruff, secretary to Dean Jackson and niece of Mrs. Jackson. Betty took to finding a seat beside me, and after evening meal, we would

walk together, at first to her car parked near Administration for her drive back to Greenfield. After a time, when South Crossley settled down, we extended our walk, sometimes marking the perimeter of campus roadways, but never venturing into the forested acres lying west of us. Such a woodland excursion, surrounded as we were by several hundred celibate boys and their watchful mentors, would have disgraced us.

In her friendship Betty was as modest as I was, and I was the least imaginably sexually aggressive. I knew I was a homosexual and would never marry, yet I craved the company of a woman. It would never have occurred to me to seek out a male companion. As a matter of fact, except for knowing what I was, at Mount Hermon I never acknowledged myself to myself except to buy a copy of Havelock Ellis' The Psychology of Sex and comb it for every hint of candor about sexual digression.

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I became so exhausted with virtually singlehanded supervising South Crossley that after about a month of pressure, I phoned the Infirmary, and asked if I could come in after my last class Friday afternoon and sleep without interruption till I woke Saturday morning. At that time, I had a large glass of orange juice, rolled over and went to sleep. After this second slumber, I woke refreshed Sunday morning, had orange juice, two softboiled eggs and toast for breakfast, and went back to South Crossley to take up my burden. By this time, the routine had become so well established that the floor officers could make

their bedcheck reports to Jim Covell without burdening him with any great supervisory duties, though it was necessary to have him on call in case of an emergency.

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Just before Columbus Day weekend, I had an invitation from two secretaries in Administration to go for a weekend. Doris Ellwell, a tall brunette with a prominent cleavage between her two front upper teeth, had just bought a new Dodge. She and her fellow secretary Marian Ingersol, a not pretty but friendly petite blonde, had been planning a trip to Howe Caverns, southwest of Albany followed by a journey up the Hudson to Ausable Chasm for overnight. We would cross Lake Champlain at the new bridge near Ticonderoga and return through Middlebury, Rutland, Manchester Center, and Brattleboro and back to Mount Hermon late Sunday afternoon.

They drove first to Brattleboro to pick up a young man who had worked in their office last year. They were sure I would like him. It was a tempting offer. It would be my first time away from campus since I had escaped to Clayton and Abbie in Northfield to study Advanced Grammar. I welcomed the invitation and again enlisted the cooperation of Jim Covell to accept the Saturday bedchecks.

It turned out that Alvin Stetson, although not an administrative fireball, was exactly to my taste. He and I rode in back. Doris provided us with a lap robe. The morning was crisp. We spread it over our laps and leaned forward to carry on

a con-versation with the girls in front. At first I was silent while they shared reminiscences of experiences in the office last year. It never became clear why Alvin left Hermon to go back to live with his mother and work in an insurance office at the foot of Brattleboro Main Street where we picked him up in late morning.

We were immediately convivial. Alvin's and my heads were together as we gabbled, leaning toward the two girls up front. Under the lap robe, our knees were together, and then our hands, and before long we had discovered each other's cocks. For me it was so utterly unexpected I could hardly believe my good fortune. I never gave a thought to why Doris and Marian were so sure I would like Alvin, but their hunch was right. I didn't find him someone to look up to with admiration, but his inclinations and mine were perfectly tuned to the occasion.

At the Caverns, we enlisted the help of an avuncular guide to take us underground and then on a crepuscular boatripe under lowhanging roofs, our lantern revealing a damp irregularity of ceiling dripping with stalactites and a light rain of dew. We all four of us took to each other cheek by jowl, hand to glove.

From Howe Caverns we traveled north to Schenectady and up the Hudson through Glen Falls and near the Champlain Ferry to Burlington found a bed and breakfast, where the landlady told us the only accommodation she could provide was a double bedroom with a partitioning divider between two double beds. It was possible to guess her intention, but we had our own. After

lights out Alvin and I were so well occupied on our side of the partition that I at least never heard a peep from the girls.

The next morning we drove back on the west side as far as the bridge, then crossed over. I began to realize that we would get to Middlebury in time for Sunday service. We parked behind the chapel and I hurried upstairs into the gallery and, aware of, but ignoring, the service, managed to whisper a few words to Mrs. Moody and make my exit followed by patronizing glances from faculty wives who knew or guessed I was an alumnus garnering an instant renewal of my college affiliation.

We took the back road past Shoreham and Lake Bomaseen, then swung over to route 7 to route 30 to Brattleboro, where Alvin chose to get out where we picked him up.

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Betty Woodruff was not at supper that night, but on our Monday night stroll back to her car, she seemed absentminded. When I asked what was the matter, she said, "You did yourself a lot of damage." She mentioned the Jacksons, and I gathered there had been gossip among the male staffers at Administration, including Dean Jackson. In a counter huff of my own, I said, "What I do with my off campus time is my own business."

Doris and Marian and I didn't carry on our instant comradeship. It seemed to be their choice as well as mine. In a week or so, Betty had renewed our discreet nightly progress around the roads of the campus.

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I am still itching, and finally go to see young Doctor Pelham, who takes a look at my poison ivy, and says it seems to be a virulent dose. If I wish he will write to New York City and make a date with two Yale Medical College classmates who are in practice as skin specialists. He thinks it a good idea to have them examine me.

After a year and a half I had pretty much stopped writing to Emma Lou at Middlebury, but I had a note from Rollin Campbell saying he was studying at Union Theological Seminary and inviting me to visit him and his mother and sister on West Rock Avenue in New Haven any time Christmas vacation. I wrote back I had a date with those two doctors, but inviting him and his sister to come in to the city for a Friday night performance of Sydney Kings-ley's Dead End. He replied that Helen would park their car near Columbia University and they would meet me at my West 34th Street YMCA, a suggestion of Dr. Porter when he heard I would be staying a few days in the city.

I got there on Thursday in time for an afternoon appointment with Drs. Aldershot and Salem. They were solicitously thorough in their examination, Dr. Salem calling his partner in for consultation. They jarred me by affirming that they were not yet sure what I had but it was not poison ivy. I should return Friday. By one o'clock I had checked out of my room and brought my suitcase down to a luggage room in Pennsylvania Station.

The young doctors seemed guardedly amused, and told me I had something called scabies, usually sexually transmitted. They asked if I had an idea how I contracted it, and I didn't have. They gave me a prescription for sulphur ointment, and since I was so liberally infected on feet, ankles, groin, buttocks and both hands, they prescribed a large jar. They told me to apply it generously, and if one treatment didn't cure, I was to continue dosing any "still-infected parts."

Now I went back to the Station, showed my check and asked to have the suitcase for a few minutes. I searched out a secluded cabinet in a men's john, where I opened the package and removed the cover, and got a powerful whiff of the contents. The stink was enough for me simply to dab a bit between fingers of both hands, and get the jar inside out of sight and smell. Then I concealed the jar back in storage.

Rollin and Helen met me in the foyer of the Y. Helen turned out to be older than Rollin but the same kind of ordinary sort, in some branch of social service. I forgot about the itch in the excitement of the play. The theater was an intimate, small house, where no matter where your seats were you practically sat on stage. The plot was fast moving and all mixed up but no bother because I felt so close to the dead end kids. They were street kids swimming in the dirty water of East River, and seemed sentenced to life on their miserable street.

After the play we have to go get the car, and I have no idea of New York distances and it's only when we seem to have

ridden for miles that I realize I should have collected my suitcase and taken it with us to the theater.

Helen decides to stay in an all night drugstore near Columbia University, while Rollin and I rattle all the way back by subway to my locker, then all the way back to Columbia. It's very late when we get back to West Rock Avenue in New Haven. I have a room to myself and wait around for the others to go to bed then take the doctors' advice to have a real hot bath and douse myself with the ointment. The tub is old fashioned, claw-footed and lined with copper, and when I have finished applying the lotion, I hop in between fresh sheets and fall to sleep in a minute. In the morning I feel an immense relief. Suddenly my nine-month debilitating itch has disappeared. But the trouble is, both sheets are daubed with yellow, stinking ointment, and when I take another bath, as the doctors advised for the morning after, I have a devil of a time scrubbing the copper tub clean of any traces of sulphur. Too late I wish I had waited to get back to Mount Hermon before applying the ointment. Fortunately the sheets seem to have absorbed the ointment. Blankets and mattress are, so far as I can see, uncontaminated. I unmake the bed and put the sheets in the hamper in the bathroom. I get Mrs. Campbell aside and tell her what I have done, and advise her to boil the sheets. She is very good about it: "Don't have another thought about it."

I still have several days of vacation. I decide to stop in Springfield and visit my cousin Raymond Wilson. I haven't seen him since we played together in the sandbank at Grampa Glazier's. Just before leaving for New York I had a Christmas card from him inviting me to visit. There was a pleading, feminine cast to the writing, and, remembering it, my freedom from the itch triggered a sexual appetite, which I didn't consciously acknowledge.

When my bus got to Springfield, I asked the driver for a stopover, and carried my luggage over to a newspaper/magazine kiosk, where Ray was on duty. The tailend of lunch hour, he could only snap a newspaper into one outstretched hand, grab the change, and snap another paper to another customer. He would not be free till five o'clock. With him was a cocky, older boy, who immediately invited me to go to a movie to kill time until Ray would be free. Ray urged me to go. My unknown new friend carried my bag behind the counter and drew me along with him to the marquee of a continuous performance movie. I was wearing my castiron overcoat hand tailored two years earlier in Middlebury. In the darkened theater we found two vacant seats half way along a crowded row and when I fumbled to get out of my coat, Bob helped me and laid the coat across both our laps along with his sweater. The movie was well under way and I quickly was absorbed in catching up with the story. Gradually, also, I began to feel a powerful sexual magnetism from Bob's presence

beside me. And I began to feel hungry, not having had anything since breakfast.

I whispered I had to go to the john, and reached for my coat, making my way back along the aisle, Bob closely following. In the large semicircle of urinals, I was standing with my coat between us. Bob reached for it and we stood there side by side. He had his eye on me. With him watching, I was afraid I would get an erection. I was unable to piss. I exclaimed I was hungry and suggested we go to the ticket taker and request a raincheck that would allow us to leave and return after we went out for a sandwich. Bob was doubtful we could, but I assured him I had had no trouble obtaining such a favor on Broadway.

I couldn't find my ticket stub and reached down and took one from the floor. The ticket taker seemed doubtful and referred us to the manager, who tossed us out when he saw the hour stamped on my ticket. My plan had been to have the sandwich and return to the dark theater shielding myself from admitting that both of us had a pretty good idea what was on the other's mind. We went for our sandwich, then returned to the newsstand, which by then had lost its queue of customers. Bob suggested Ray call his mother on Hastings Street and we could walk there instead of waiting in the cold for Ray to be free.

We made a long walk of it up State Street past the Armory to the edge of a deep ravine with a beaten path running out of sight into the scrub brush -- a shortcut, Bob said, to the streets in the neighborhood of Hastings Street. I was suddenly

afraid. When he stopped to take a piss, I pushed past to the brim on the far side. My fears immediately subsiding, I was sorry I had not stayed for him. He saw me to number 116 Hastings, telling me he lived nearby at 309 Newbury.

Mae Wilson and George and their married daughter Roxie and Raymond were very kind to me. Ray and I slept in his double bed. He was cuddly and gentle and suffered from the handicap of having an unretracted foreskin that gave him pain when I tried to retract it.

After breakfast next morning, I went downtown with Ray and stayed with him till noon when we went for lunch together. In midafternoon I walked back to Hastings Street, where Mae told me Bob had just been there asking for me, wanting to take me to a movie. I could tell by her manner that she thought him a rascal, so I stayed at home reading till my imagination worked on me so much I walked over to 309 Newbury. A small boy playing hopscotch told me to go in and straight upstairs and I would find Bob in the room at the head of the stairs. Instead, I went back downtown and at five o'clock walked home with Ray. The next morning after a second night of sleeping with Raymond I returned to Mount Hermon.

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Back on campus, I haven't a smitch of itch. A couple days into the second semester, Dr. Pelham hails me and tells me he has had a letter from his specialist friends in New York City.

They had quite a laugh over the two brothers at Mount Hermon who both contracted a sexual disease.

I say, "I don't know what you're talking about," and he says, "Didn't you know that your brother also contracted scabies?"

It's the first I heard of it. I wonder if that was why Larry wouldn't sleep in the same bed with me after we went to live with Melvin and Bernice. Was he avoiding me because he had somehow contracted the infection and didn't want me to catch it? Or had he contracted it from me? And if so, where did I get it? It was more than I could figure out. And I was so glad to be rid of it, how I got it was the least of my worries.

BOOK II.08WICKED...and Spotless as the Lamb

Chapter Eight

-1-

I didn't know I had new neighbors till one of them made himself known when the floor officers came in and we were busy with their first after-midyears bedchecks. The new boy, when I noticed him, was sitting in a chair near the door in jock shorts, teeshirt, and barefooted. A small, chunky boy, about my build but more muscular, he was just sitting there like a patient waiting for attention at the infirmary.

Bill Craig was calling my attention to his bedcheck and I saw the names of the two new boys, McKnight and Aronson.

Bill looked over at the visitor and called him by name, "Is there something you're looking for, Aronson?"

The boy was rubbing both legs above the knees. He looked at me and said impudently, "I came in to see if Mr. Glazier would like to draw me." He stood up flexing his muscles.

I said, "Are you all right?"

He repeated, "Would you like to draw me? I could pose for you." He took a gladiatorial pose.

All four floor officers and I were looking at him.

I said, "You had better get back to your room. Bill has you checked in for lights out. You are supposed to be in bed."

He grinned and without hurrying slouched away, and I heard a door open and shut.

I asked, "Do any of you know anything about him?"

Bill said, "He's a trouble maker, moved from Middle."

I heard nothing more about him for two weeks, when Bill Craig reported there had been small sums of money reported missing from three different rooms on our floor. Although he had no real evidence he suspected Aronson. When I called Art Platt in Administrations the next morning, and simply reported

glazier

the money missing, he asked if I had any idea who had done it, and I told him Bill's suspicion.

Art told me, "I think you should search his luggage."

"When?"

"Technically, you are not supposed to conduct such a search in the absence of the boy."

"We don't have any solid evidence."

"Aronson has been in trouble before."

"You mean, stealing?"

"He's been in trouble of various kinds. Why don't you make a search after bedcheck?"

When I went to the room at 10:30, the surprising thing is that neither boy objected. After knocking, turning my passkey in the lock, and switching on their light, I found them each sitting up in his bed watching me. I felt uncomfortable. I had never before intruded in a boy's room. The extraordinary thing is they neither seemed disturbed. There were two trunks both labelled, and when I asked for his key, Aronson reached over to his bureau and handed it to me. In his trunk I turned things over and found nothing except a hodgepodge of clothing that looked well pawed over. When I closed the lid and locked it and returned the key, I told him I would have to search his bureau drawers, also. He said, "Be my guest."

To my surprise, the clothes were neatly laid away.

With considerable amusement he watched me, and then pointed to his shirt and pants thrown over the bedside chair, and I went through the pockets, finding nothing except loose change and a couple of dollar bills. The whole proceeding took about a half hour. I carefully avoided touching any of McKnight's belongings.

When I made my report Art Platt wasn't surprised. "We never found anything, but boys in Center Crossley lost money and other things, and thought he did it. Keep your eyes and ears open."

Three weeks later, I was asked to make another search for missing money and a wrist watch. I thoroughly disliked being asked, but Art Platt considered it part of my duties. This time, when I opened their door after lights out, Aronson was in McKnight's bed straddling him.

He looked over his shoulder and didn't move. "Come here, Mr. Glazier. Feel me. I haven't even got a hardon."

McKnight was lying underneath, looking up at me passively. I said, "You'd better get back where you belong," and Aronson disengaged himself and flopped over to his own bed.

My search was as unfruitful as the first.

On making my report, I asked Art if he thought I should have searched McKnight's belongings also.

"Nobody has suspected him. Why do you ask?"

I said only, "They seem as thick as thieves."

Art gave me a lingering look but said nothing further.

The night before spring vacation, Bill Craig came to me his face flushed and angry. "Mr. Glazier, my father is dead, and my mother works hard to keep me here. A week ago she sent me a fifty dollar check to pay for my travel expenses and I cashed it at the bookstore yesterday, and all the money is missing. I can't go home for vacation."

I went to his room with him, and he showed me the empty cash box in his top bureau drawer. "It was locked. Somebody picked the lock, and picked our door lock, too."

When I reported the loss to Art Platt, he said, "This is getting really serious.*

He told me McKnight would be gone for Easter, but Aronson was staying and would have a visit from his mother. Dr. Porter had a letter from her. Because we had no real proof, she had not been informed of our suspicions. In her letter, she said how happy she was that Aronson had made it through this half semester without any trouble reported to her.

Art had managed to find a ride to and from home for Bill Craig. McKnight was home for Easter. Once I heard Aronson's mother with him in his room, but he didn't bring her to introduce her.

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I stayed on campus to be on hand for the twenty or so boys who had reasons for not going home. On Easter Sunday about eleven o'clock, there was a drubbing on my door. When I opened it, it was Skinny Webster, a tad from the third floor.

"Mr. Glazier, come quick! Come see the big tent!"

He was running upstairs and I followed him. Boys were overflowing from an open door midway of the corridor. Skinny squirmed in through the crowd, and I followed to where I could look in. Steve Maynard, our one-hundred-and-eighty pound, six-foot quarterback, was lying under a bedspread looking up at me, grinning. Both hands were under the spread.

All the boys were looking at me expectantly. I took one look and said, "He's just showing off for you. Don't you believe him for a minute. He's got a yardstick under the bedspread. All of you, now get a move on. I want you outside enjoying the sunshine. Don't stay cooped up inside on this glorious day!"

I turned and walked back downstairs, hearing their voices as they broke up and scattered, most of them in a few minutes chasing each other downstairs and outside. Looking down, I saw Steve leading them in touch football.

-3-

Right after vacation, we had a slew of reports of missing money and other property, not only on our second floor, but on all floors of South Crossley. Boys had come back with gifts from their parents. As much as a hundred dollars was involved. I reported it to Art Platt, but he seemed to have no solution. He said Dr. Porter was anxious not to disturb a parent unless we had something tangible. I went to the bookstore manager and

learned that Aronson had bought a new bookbag and an expensive MOUNT HERMON jumper.

I decided to take things into my own hands and got from our central telephone operator in Administration the home phone number of Aronson's mother in Newton. After lights out I gave her a call. I asked if on her visit she had bought a new bookbag for her son or a new jumper, or given him money to buy them.

She replied, "Mr. Glazier. I had a happy time visiting Jerry. I'm a widow. I didn't give him money and didn't buy any expensive presents. I resent your implying that Jerry is a thief. He's had trouble before, and it's been a great blessing that at Mount Hermon this semester he has finally settled down. He particularly mentioned you as somebody who has been a great help to him. I intend to report your phone call to Dr. Porter and tell him how much I resent your implications."

A week or so later, I had a phone call from our receptionist asking about a mysterious long distance call billed to my phone. I drew a complete blank and denied I could have made it. The next day I remembered the call to Aronson's mother and called back and asked if the call was made to Newton.

"Yes. To Aronson's mother. Do you think he could have made it when you were out of your room?"

"No. I made it. I'd forgotten. I almost never call long distance. I had completely forgotten. I make a point of not making long distance phone calls from my office phone."

A few days later, I had a phone call from Dr. Porter, advising me never to call a parent unless his office instructed me. He was much disturbed by a letter from Mrs. Aronson. I told him about my investigations that I had already reported to Art Platt. He knew about them.

Another week and Bill Craig reported that Aronson had been fired from Mount Hermon. Nobody ever told me who searched, but somebody did in his absence, and found all sorts of missing

articles, including, what I had never before missed, a small blue sportscap that I was sure was still on the shelf in my closet, but when I checked, it was the one found in Aronson's possession. I doubted if he ever wore it, only prided himself on getting it out from under my nose without my noticing.

Nobody in Administration congratulated me for cracking our crime wave.

-4-

I've had a phone call from Esther Williamson inviting me to be in their play. They are choosing parts for a murder mystery. I tell her I'm too busy with all the new things I have to contend with. She keeps on begging.

"We've lost touch with you. We want you back. Ralph Taylor has agreed to be the murderer. We think you'd be perfect for his accomplice."

I'm thinking it would be good for me to have an excuse to get away once or twice a week evenings, if I could be back for bedchecks.

"I don't have time to be in a play. But would you like me to try making a prompt copy, and be a kind of director? I took a course in play production last summer. You know, I'll plot out the action ahead of time, and be on hand at the beginnings of rehearsals and make suggestions for where everybody ought to be and how to get from one place to another. I would expect to go over it with you. It's a way of kind of plotting the action to highlight the dramatic tension. You have to decide ahead of time where to put the furniture and try to plan exits and entrances and so forth. There's one hitch. I would have to have somebody drive here to pick me up and get me back in time for bedchecks at 10:30."

Leon Dunnell becomes my ferry to carry me to rehearsals, picking me up after dinner at West Hall and carrying me to the Town Hall in Northfield two or three times a week to rehearse Grim Business. The actors have already learned their lines when

for the first stage rehearsal for each act I put them through their paces with a copy of my prompt copy in hand. For Act I it's hard for them but they like the idea, by Act II have caught on, and by Act III are adding their own suggestions to mine. The schedule is strenuous: ...rehearse every night for three weeks and the last week have a dress rehearsal Saturday afternoon and performance that evening. It's the first time any of them have given any thought to more than learning their lines and delivering most of them as near as possible from center stage. In the nearly darkened stage in scene 1 of Act III, where the only light trickles in from off stage right, there is considerable moving of voices from every nook and cranny, and the confused effect is something never before witnessed in Northfield amateur theatricals.

For intermission between the first two acts Leon Dunnell plays light piano pieces that nobody pays attention to. He asks me on the spur of the moment to fill in for him between Acts II and III. The grand piano has been moved into the wings, where it's inaccessible, and my nervousness vanishes when I realize that the upright, pushed close to the stage in front of the proscenium arch, positions me with back to my audience. I play the two pieces I've been practising at Mount Hermon Music Hall. Minuet a L'Antique goes without a hitch, and the applause is thunderous, so I play Marche Militaire, then rush into the wings to give a pep talk for Act III.

At the end of the play Mrs. Carmean, the mother of one of last year seventh graders, pushes through the crowd to tell me that this is the best theatrical performance she has ever seen put on in Northfield. I take her word for it. On the way back to Mount Hermon later Leon tells me that if he had known I was going to play classical, he would have played something different. I don't say that I played the only two pieces I know, which is not quite true, because I could have played To a Wild

Rose for an encore if there had been time for it, but I am glad I didn't have to.

-5-

The next weekend Leon invited me to go for overnight to Boston for a Saturday night party at the apartment of one of his old classmates at Boston Conservatory. It's almost the end of my first year as housemaster, and I celebrate by asking Jim Covell to fill in for me. It crossed my mind that Leon had on his mind that we would have sex, but he placed me in a rooming house across the street from his friend's and I slept alone there in a double bed. There were twenty or so at the party, which was all male except two couples of women who treated me with great friendliness. I felt uncomfortable with the men, they all seemed to be talking a language I couldn't understand - - brilliant and rather scathing references to Boston centers of music, theatre, and painting and sculpture. They seemed to know everything about everything I knew nothing about. I was quite out of it. They were all of them, it was clear, much more accomplished than any of the writers or artists they were discussing. My chief new experience was to try hard toast spread with something that looked like frog's eggs, or oldfashioned, starchy, unrefined boiled tapioca. I didn't care for its raw, fishy flavor. Leon whispered it was caviar.

When Leon took me across the street to my room, I was disappointed to have him leave me. I had been secretly looking forward to our night together, but he hardly came into the room and was obviously going back to the party. The next morning I slept late and purposely stayed in bed till he knocked on my door. I jumped out of bed in my loose pajamas and was doing pushup exercises on the rug when he came in.

-6-

At the end of our second and final week of exams, on Friday night when Fritz Emory, officer on the first floor, turns in his

bedcheck, Steve Maynard, our quarterback, and Scot Eldridge, captain of our baseball team, both seniors, have stuffed their pillows with dirty clothes and are not in their beds. I go down with Fritz and check. I tell him not to worry, I will take care of it. After I've filed the other bedchecks, I go downstairs with my passkey and put on the light and make a second inspection. How am I going to be sure when the boys return? I stand there passkey in hand, then go over and look out the window. The bottom sash has been pushed all the way up. I wonder if the boys asked Fritz, next door, to cover for them. I'm grateful he didn't. It's past eleven. I don't think it's much of an emergency, hardly important enough to alert Art Platt, probably already in bed. I stand there. I go back upstairs and get my copy of Look Homeward, Angel that I've just started and lie in the bed next to the window, waiting for the boys to return. When at midnight, there's still no sign of them, I turn out the light, make myself comfortable and go to sleep.

Somewhere around 2:30, instantly alert, I hear a scrabble at the window and see a shadow slide inside. I lie quiet. Whoever it is comes to my cot, feels of my face, then goes to the other cot. I can hear him undressing in the dark.

When he is in bed, he clears his throat and says, "I thought you were going all the way to the Sem."

I say, "Is that you, Scot?"

"Mr. Glazier! What are you doing in Steve's bed."

"Well, Scot, I was pretty sure you hadn't gone far, and I didn't want to stand all night under your window, so I came in and made myself comfortable."

There's no answer for a minute. "Well, Mr. Glazier, I don't think Steve is going to like it."

I say, "What do you have to say for yourself? What did you do?"

"We walked out to route ten and down to the bridge and along the west bank of the river to the train trestle, and when Steve said he was going to cross over, I decided to come back."

I turned on the reading lamp and looked at my watch, "You took your time doing it."

"I waited around thinking he would come back. I went to sleep in a meadow, and it finally began to get damp. I certainly didn't expect to find you in Steve's bed. What do you think we will get?"

"I'll have to turn in a report to Art Platt."

"Do you think they'll throw me out on my ear this close to graduation?"

"I wouldn't guess. You'll have to wait see."

"What will you recommend?"

"I'll talk it over with Art Platt tomorrow morning."

It was a friendly conversation. I felt almost like his roommate, as if we were waking in the night and talking and then turning over to go back to sleep.

It was early dawn when I heard Steve scramble up in through the window. He tiptoed to the bed. He was feeling around for the stuffed pillow and when he felt my face, whispered "Scot, what are you doing in my bed?"

By now Scot was rustling his mattress. "It's Mr. Glazier!"

I uncurled and pulled out of bed.

I said, "Did you get all the way to the Seminary?"

"Hot damn! How long have you been here?"

"Since around eleven o'clock. I'm going upstairs to bed. You'd better catch forty winks while you can. I imagine Art Platt will want to talk to you. Do you have any more exams?"

"I finished my last yesterday."

"How did it go?"

"It was in Gym. I know I passed it."

I never was called for a conference after Art got my and Fritz Emory's reports. It was par for Administration not to

consult me, and I would have recommended at most a verbal reprimand. I really didn't blame the boys for celebrating the end of school.

I feel like celebrating, myself. A week from now I'll be a student again at Bread loaf.

BOOK II.09WICKED...and Spotless as the Lamb

Chapter Nine

-1-

I go out to Gramp's, getting there for the first round of haying. I manage the bull rake. Aunt Helen takes a picture of me standing between clothesline and road on the south side of the house. I look about fifteen. I can let down my defenses. I haven't thought of Cecil Denton in nearly a year, but we'll be meeting again at Bread Loaf. I get the negative from Aunt Helen and have a copy made and send it with the note that I'm looking forward to the first of July. "Last night I was lying in my bed upstairs under the eaves, and remembered our night in Boston."

Noontimes I get lunch for myself and Gramp, usually fried potatoes, bacon and eggs and some dessert left over from last night's dinner. Sometimes I make a package vanilla pudding. It has an old taste as if the package has been lying around for a year. At night Aunt Helen brings down a dish for us.

When Gramp and Uncle Perry finish haying and go back to work in the mill, I try to write during the morning. It's as if I don't have anything to write about. Nothing comes out except words.

Afternoons are free. The house is empty without Gram. I can't just sit there all day gnawing on the end of my pen. I wander alone onto Brushy Mountain, climbing the cliffs.

One afternoon I stopped at Aunt Gloria's and she unlocked the parlor -- the first time I was ever in there -- and let me play the piano. I was playing all three of my pieces. I was all on fire with Marche Militaire, and had just got to the windup when Aunt Gloria stuck her head in the door, and said somebody out on the street had stopped and wanted to meet me.

A lanky middleaged man with a long, gentle face was standing at her gate.

"I didn't know we had a concert pianist in Moores Corner."

Aunt Gloria said, "This is my nephew Lyle I was telling you about. Lyle, this is Gail Friend."

He said, "I live in the house uphill from your Uncle Henry Towne's. I built a summer home on the old Briggs place."

Aunt Gloria said, "Up above where your great grandfather and grandmother Briggs used to live. Gail has built a big house on the level ground over beyond the Bourne place if you turn left off the Cooleyville Road."

"I never go that way," Gail said. "I use the shortcut this side Henry Towne's. It's only a few steps."

Aunt Gloria said, "It's quite a place. You ought to see it, Lyle. It has a view over the Watson place to Brushy Mountain."

I never heard of it before. I like Gail. He seems unlike Moores Corner people I know, refined and educated.

"I used to be an interior decorator in New York City. I built my summer place on the hill, and lately I've been staying year round. If you have time, I'll show you. You can play my grand piano."

Aunt Gloria said, "Why don't you go, Lyle?"

So I walked with Gail past the store, and over the steel bridge onto Cooleyville Road. Just before the Towne place we turned left onto the hill path. I hadn't been prepared for such a spread. It's a low white house on a plateau before the hill continues above it. On the patio I turned and looked over the rooftops on past the Watson Place to the old road to Brushy Mountain. You could see all the way to Mount Toby where in July in the old days we used to have the Glazier/Maynard picnic, and climb the steep pitch to the firetower.

I feel shy with Gail. He must be rich to own such a wonderful house. He goes in and comes out with two bottles of beer, apologizing, "They're pisswarm. I ran out of ice for my

icebox." We sit there on two lounge chairs. Gail reaches to touch his bottle to mine, and says, "Cheers."

He drops his other hand to my knee and presses. I feel comfortable but not wholly at ease. In this Moores Corner atmosphere, my years at Middlebury and Mount Hermon have slipped away and I'm a country boy in the presence of this city man. Gail has not lifted his hand from my knee, and keeps patting me. I begin to feel the tingle of beer, and stretch out my leg under his pat, and he moves his hand higher. I close my eyes and we lie there, sipping our beers. He is giving me a massage. I don't resist. Gradually I relax under him.

He says, "Oh, look what I found!"

I squirm around under him and come up hard under his fingers. He takes my right hand and places it on his thigh, and I begin moving it around and feel his long cock coming up. He unzips my fly and takes out my cock, and bends down and touches his lips to it. I unzip him.

He says, "Come in. I'll show you my house."

The downstairs is finished and furnished but I'm surprised to find that the flight to the second floor is still rough. There's a door open to a toilet, and beyond it his bedroom. We lie on a bed without headboard or foot board. Gradually he undresses me and takes off his own clothes.

He turns me on my back and presses in between my legs from the back.

He says, "When I built the house, my streetboy Jeremy was living with me. I brought him here from New York. He used to like me to put my cock like this in his crease and move it like this."

He was moving forward and back. He turned me on my side and began masturbating me slowly while he continued to push gently from the rear. It felt better and better, I simply lay there and let him play with me. I could feel his cock coming up

harder. It was lubricating itself and felt really good. He was bringing me up with his hand.

I said, "Oh," and held his hand still.

He said, "Are you coming?"

I said, "Almost."

He began to move himself faster and held me tighter and moved his hand faster. We were both forgetting ourselves. I could feel him rising and juicing, and then I forgot him because I felt myself squirting, then I felt him pour himself into the crease at my back. He pulled me close to him and we both lay still, with him holding me. We lay without moving for a long time. After a while Gail crawled off the bed and was gone and came back with a bowl of warm soapy water and a cloth and washed me, turning me this way and that and bathing till I could dress and hurtle downhill on the path whistling and arrive at Gramp's just in time for supper.

-2-

Bread Loaf is wonderful. I seem to know everybody and everybody knows me. At dinner the first night waiting on table, I catch sight of Denny across the diningroom and we wave to each other but I'm galloping from the kitchen with trays of food, or back with trays loaded with dirty dishes. And later, a gang of us waiters and waitresses gather on the north lawn in front of Little Theater and we gab about what we have been doing since last year. Most have been teaching English, except a shy girl who says almost nothing. Two or three times I catch sight of Denny hovering in the background between the Library and the Inn or the Inn and the library. When the gang break up, I don't feel like breaking the spell of our gathering, and gravitate over to Esther, the shy one, and say, "Where do you live?" expecting to hear Cherry, Birch, or Maple or the Inn Annex.

She says, "On a side road a quarter mile down the road beyond the house of the Saturday Evening Post Caterpillar Tractor Man."

"Oh, you mean William Hazlit Upson."

"Do you know him?"

"I don't know him but everybody knows who he is. His wife is the daughter of a former Middlebury College teacher."

"Everybody here seems to be a Middlebury graduate."

"Not everybody. I am. I've read some of his stories. He spoke to our creative writing class last year. He struck it rich with his crazy stories. He can sell them as fast as he writes them, which is about every other issue. They are pretty light weight but very amusing."

We have started along down the road.

"How do you happen to live way down on that side road?"

"I'm a late registrant. I go to Skidmore. I have to make up an entrance requirement."

"Oh, you're a freshman."

"A sophomore next year, if I'm lucky. Most everybody here is a lot older."

I made up my mind she's not interesting. She's not pretty but vulnerable, and we chatter at a great pace. I could have another relationship like Betty Woodruff at Mount Hermon, but I don't intend to spend all summer walking her back and forth. She rooms at a farmer's. She tells me she knows a shortcut across lots but she was hanging around because she's afraid of the path after dark. She has never been so far from city streets, and doesn't understand how I can be so fearless. When I leave her, I take the shortcut and am back on campus in no time. I hurry up to the hoi poi dormitory in Maple Attic but nobody is there. I kneel by my cot and get my copy of The Student's Milton that Denny wrote asking me to lend him. I hurry back to the Inn and upstairs to find him on the second floor where we both roomed last year. This year he has a single room at the end of the corridor. I knock. He says to come in. He is already in bed. He's half asleep but comes out of it.

"Where were you? I'd been looking forward to tonight, and you disappeared. After your group broke up, I went all around campus calling you but couldn't find hide nor hair."

"I walked Esther Forbes home. She was afraid of going alone in the dark. She lives way down past Upson's on a side road."

I'm standing beside his bed but he doesn't show any interest.

He says, "I got so tired of waiting I took care of myself."

He reaches for me but I pull away. I don't know what I want tonight, and I'm sorry for the way he feels, but I leave him his book and am back downstairs on my way to Maple Attic.

As I climb the rough staircase from the third floor, I hear voices from up above. We introduce ourselves. Skip Henryson, a junior at Tufts next year, has a bed next the door in the second row. In the first row beside me lying on his cot is a lanky fellow explaining that he and his father and brother have only just moved to Brattleboro from Chicago. Skip and Frank are already gabbing and I let them carry on without saying much. Frank's father used to teach at a college but is not there any longer. The other two beds are not occupied tonight but luggage is on both of them. One is supposed to be the driver of the mail truck to and from Middlebury. And the other nobody already here knows anything about.

I'm tired from my long walk. I let the two of them talk. It turns out that Skip is from the West Coast and got here because his cousin, a New York publisher John Farrar, is one of the founders of Bread Loaf. I listen for a while, then get my toothbrush and go to the showerroom and come back and undress and climb into bed. The fresh mountain air makes me drowsy. I fall almost instantly to sleep.

-3-

I'm taking Modern Poetry with Donald Davidson, who is one of the southern Fugitive Poets. We use a new anthology: Chief

Modern Poets of England and America and begin with the English poets. Mr. Davidson is a tall, quiet man, who doesn't mention his own poetry. I'm looking forward especially to Robert Frost, but we begin first with British poets. I'm pleased that he doesn't seem a bit academic. He doesn't give us a long introductory lecture. He begins partway on in the book with a minor poet W. H. Davies, a Welshman, and talks informally about how Davies was once a hobo in the US and Canada, and was a kind of untutored, natural poet. After losing a foot trying to hitch a ride on a passenger train, he went back to London and started printing and peddling his poems.

For the first assignment we are supposed to read the Davies poems in the book and go to the Library and in the Untermeyer anthology read the poem "A Great Time." I go there and find it might have come right out of his tramping around the country, though Davidson didn't say so. At any rate it's a great poem, and I copy and learn it by heart:

Sweet chance that led my steps abroad
Beyond the town where wild flowers grow,
A rainbow and a cuckoo, lord!
How rich and great the times are now.
Know all ye sheep
And cows that keep
On staring that I stand so long
In grass that's wet from heavy rain --
A rainbow and a cuckoo's song
May never come together again
May never come
This side the tomb.

What I like about the poem is it's so musical and spontaneous as if it wrote itself. You can follow the course of the sentence that runs through it. I'm sure I'm going to like this course with its teacher who starts right off giving us this

little known poet and knows him well enough to ask us to read first a poem not even in our book.

-4-

I got permission to repeat Ted Morrison's Creative Writing, with the warning that I won't be allowed to take it a third time. As if inspired I begin writing some poems Ted likes better than the free verse I turned in last year. This year he gets so he expects me to read one of them in each class. One of them he likes especially, and I resolve to submit it to American Prefaces when I get back to Mount Hermon. The class likes it partly because Ted does, but there's an argument about my using "plover" for an American bird. Thyra Vickery thinks it's British and seems out of place in a New England poem. But fortunately one of the men supports me with a remark that in his southern state there are plovers. I'm glad to have his support because actually I used the name more for rhyme than reason. I have never heard anybody in my family, either on my father's side or my mother's side, speak of seeing a "plover," but for me it's a useful rhyming bird. It's a melancholy poem:

Blow, wind, blow across the clover,
let me know when summer's done,
soon this season will be over,
daisies will be past and gone;

here the braggart upland plover
darts above my pillowed head,
thrills his upstart song above her
who shares now my lovely bed,
lest we never should recover
all the gladness that is here,
lest a wanton fate discover
sorrow for another year

Blow wind, whisper to the clover

when the summer will be done
lest I lack another lover
I'll enjoy this present one.

I don't suppose there's much genuine feeling in it, especially since the implication is that I'm talking to a girl, and I have never got that close to one I like.

What I want to do is to turn in a short story that will impress Ted as much as the one about Mom I turned in last year. I've been working on one all year at Mount Hermon, but I haven't got it in shape. It's about some boys who could be Mount Hermon students. One of them seems to be a scoundrel. He gets into all kinds of trouble, and is grouchy and nobody likes him very much, but I put a twist to it and he comes through to help one of the little kids who has always hated him because of his being a natural blowhard and tormentor. The little kid gets in real trouble when one of the seniors who is a real shit begins to abuse him, and this other smaller and younger turd comes through to rescue the puny little fellow when he's about to be annihilated. I give it this twist that for altogether selfish motives the first bastard goes after the football hero who starts kicking the baby around, calling him "girlfriend" and "honey" in front of the other guys. The first one butts in only because he thinks his territory is being poached on, but when the football varsity lineman goes too far, the first bastard steps in and uses his fists and gets a whale of a licking but manages to get in enough punches of his own so that the other guys intervene and pound the big fellow till he calls uncle, and it's like a catharsis of reversed values.

When I read it, I have all the time the fear that it's sounding sentimental, but I no sooner finish than in the discussion, I hear "spiritual" and "Christ figure" along with "irony," "atonement" and "Freudian" and a lot more I can't fathom. Thyra Vickery thinks it an example of "symbolic realism."

After class, I try to clear out in a hurry but I can hear somebody walking behind me. Along just before Maple, she catches up. It's Annie Enderson, a girl from Utah, who never says much in class, but manages always to cap the discussion with something impressive. We have never talked together. We walk past the dormitories and down over the brink past the house on the left where Ted Morrison rooms during summer school. In the Writer's Conference Kay comes for most of the session and they live in Treman.

Annie doesn't say much of anything after she hails me. We walk along in silence until she comes out with, "You made a sensation."

I'm boiling over with suppressed feeling and everything held back comes pouring out: "Is it good? I never can tell. All the time I was reading I had the feeling I was making an ass of myself. I never expected such a response. It's only my second short story."

Annie says, "They really went overboard for it."

I can't tell whether she is dampening my fervor or confirming the approval.

I say, "I want to be a writer. I don't care a damn about teaching. I want to write!"

"And don't we all?"

"Do you think there's a chance for me?" (I'm fishing.)

She says, "I haven't had much experience with literary conferences."

I know I should switch the discussion to her writing, but I'm not ready to relinquish my triumph.

"I didn't hear you say anything."

"Oh, but I did. That was my word 'irony.'"

"My whole life is ironic. I grew up in a shanty and went to a one-room school, and I don't know anything about anything - compared to others in the class, I'm an ignoramus. My father and mother committed suicide, and last summer I wrote a story

about my mother. You could say I profited from Mom's death. And this year I'm writing about the boys at Mount Hermon where I'm hired as a disciplinarian. I'm a housemaster not a teacher."

"Is that why there are no girls in your story?"

"There aren't any girls at Mount Hermon."

"Are there any in your life? Your poem about the plover seems to avoid the issue."

I have a moment of insight, "Well, I tell you. I seem to be always on the edge of something which always escapes me. Like there was a high school girl who finagled an invitation to my fraternity dance when I was a sophomore at Middlebury, and she was only after my high school ring to impress her classmates. And in my junior year there was this girl... I had to get up early to go from my dormitory to freshman commons to fix fruit for breakfast and there was a diagonal path and another diagonal crossing it, and she would be sitting at 5:30 on the steps of Mead Chapel at the top of the hill, waiting. And she would start down the other crosswalk, and once she said, 'A cross is a kiss' and I liked her but I didn't have any money and I knew I didn't love her, and the irony is..."

Annie said, "Richard Brown told me I ought to get in touch with you. He thinks you are wonderful. But here we are talking, and you don't give a thought to me. You are thinking only of yourself. And you seem to think it to your credit if a girl likes you and you just don't have time for her. I think you are thoroughly self centered..."

I had been on the point of telling her how when it was too late I had asked Mary Priscilla to marry me and she was already wearing a ring. That was the irony I was going to mention. But Annie was already ahead of me walking fast back toward the Inn, and I wouldn't have known how to talk to her. It was the only time we had ever even spoken to each other. as if we avoided each other.

The next week when Ted gave back my story at the end of the class, he surprised me by walking along with me. When we got to Maple, we were still talking. It was the first time he paid attention to me as if I were his equal. I was enormously grateful. We didn't discuss the story. We just walked and talked about Bread Loaf, and the night, and how wonderful it was to be there. We passed his rooming house on the brink of the hill. When we came to the crossroad a half mile further on, we turned west and could hear the brook prattling down from the mountain. It was a dark night with moonlight about to crest the mountaintop to the east.

On a high bank we both saw at the same time a glow in the dark that looked like a subdued bonfire. It was phosphorescence. Moss was glowing in the dark as if it were throwing off this dull and beautiful light to consecrate its decay. Ted reached for a handful and we leaned into each other studying the magic in his hand. It was awesome to be out here just before moonlight studying this phenomenon I had never before seen. I felt very close to Ted, as if he were my older brother, yet not my brother, but somebody closer. I had been adoring him for a year. We stood there studying the handful, then finally Ted tossed it aside, and I let him guide. At the crossroads we turned back toward campus.

When we came to his rooming house on the brink of the hill, he asked, "Would you like to come in for a nightcap?"

I was too full of emotion. Nobody had ever before invited me for a nightcap. I hardly knew what he meant. I knew he was talking about liquor, but I had never tasted anything stronger than wine. He was inviting me into an experience that was utterly beyond me. I thanked him but said I guess not. All the way back to Maple I walked on a cushion of air as if I had seen and heard miracles that lifted the top off my head. The moon shone down on my transfiguration. It was more than I could bear.

My third course is with Leonora Branch, a large-boned lame woman who lives with her companion Miss Smith in Cherry Cottage in a room large enough for her to hold her class there. She has been teaching at Bread Loaf for ever. Before she had polio or whatever she has, she was a vigorous hiker on the Long Trail, but now she's pretty much confined to her room. She teaches a course on The Training of Literary Judgment based on a book she wrote on her Bread Loaf course. It's somewhat like Harry Owen's freshman course at Middlebury, and is supposed to make you thoughtful by comparing literature to painting and sculpture and music and the other fine arts.

I know about the course because Denny took it last year. In fact, he practically came to Bread Loaf in order to take it. I bought the book and it looks interesting. I'm soon introduced as the student who writes poetry, and am invited to read my poems. In fact, after a while, it begins to seem as if for this class I'm the resident artist who is in the class in order to give them up-to-the-minute examples to talk about in relation to categories of criticism described in Miss Branch's book. For me it begins to be a course where my job is to furnish these examples, and it's very flattering to have poems like "Blow, wind, blow across the clover" talked about as if they are as important as poems you find in a book. My advice is frequently called on to settle thorny questions about how Matthew Arnold or Walter Pater or Whistler or Plato or Anatole France might respond to my poem, or to a reproduction of a painting Miss Branch has passed around for us to study.

I'm in another play directed by Hortense Moore, and all in all it is a very satisfactory summer, and I get an A in all three courses. Skip Henderson and I become great friends. He's a friendly bear of a boy who insists on treating me as his contemporary and throws himself on top of me if I am reading on

the bed, and we wrestle like kindergartners or a couple of puppies at each other on the lawn. It's like those wrestling matches in the barn attic we had in Northfield Farms, except that Skip and I are not trying to grab each other's cock, though I have to confess that the close physical contact is most gratifying. We are both so obviously manly that nobody around us seems ever to think for a moment there is anything out of the way in our rough housing.

On the last night of summer school, Ted Franklin has offered me a ride back to Brattleboro before the Writers' Conference for a between sessions visit with Gramma Briggs and Uncle Forrest and Iona. Everybody except me clears out of the attic and goes downtown to Middlebury in Ted's car to have a drink. I beg out (actually because I don't have a cent, but I don't say so). I'm feeling miserably lonely, when I hear the car pull up and park in the grass under the trees south of the dormitory.

I rush to the window on the west side and look down on the road. I can hear their voices without making out what they're saying. I judge that Skip has thrown himself on Frank and is being carried piggyback. When they get in front of Maple, I can hear Skip shouting in a thick voice, "I want to fuck a duck! I want to fuck a duck!" He seems to be whipping Frank's ass as he keeps shouting.

The two of them come rushing upstairs, Frank hushing Skip to quiet him down. By the time they reach the attic, they are fairly respectable, but I gather that Frank is partly supporting Skip, who is three sheets to the wind. When they turn on the overhead light, I'm snuggled down in bed, and they switch off the light and undress in the dark, Skip at his cot at my feet and Frank beside me. After a while I hear a rustle as if someone has brushed past, and then there's nothing till I hear a whisper or a sigh and then another rustle back in the narrow space between beds. I feel horribly isolated and left out of

it. In a few minutes Frank begins to snore, but Skip is tossing and then he begins to groan. I gather he has a raging headache. I lie there listening, then get up and feel my way past Skip's bed to the bathroom, run cool water on a towel and come back and sit beside Skip on his cot and smooth the wet towel over his forehead. He is lying on his back still groaning but seems to appreciate my nursing. I keep on until the towel gets hot then go back and cool it again. I don't know how long I keep it up, but a long time, till Skip drops into a deep sleep.

In Brattleboro the next noon when we arrive at Uncle Forrest's sprawling big house on Chase Street, I'm surprised to find that Ted's father is there waiting for his son. I have never heard much about why he left Chicago but just enough to guess there was something happened that made him have to get out.

Anyway, it's as if he knows I'll be there for Ted to drop off. He's middleaged, nice looking, and I am grateful for the lift from his son. I don't understand why Mr. Franklin is insistent I should come see them the next day out in West Brattleboro.

He says, "Frank has been writing about you. Come see me. You just take the West Brattleboro bus downtown and come to the end of the line. Anybody there can tell you where to find the Franklins."

I don't know what there is about it but I don't do it.

The second day I call Alvin Stetson at his workplace at the foot of Main Street, and remind him of our trip, and we arrange to meet at seven at the corner of Main and Route 9. We go into that bar where Ralph Taylor pretended to get soused, and treat each other to a couple rounds of beer. As soon as we are warmed up we are ready for each other, but he says he can't take me to his house because he lives with his mother, and, although I have a key to the front door next to my bedroom at the opposite end of the house from the kitchen door used by Uncle Forrest and

Aunt Iona and Gramma Briggs, I don't feel right about smuggling him in to their house.

We walk up and down Main Street, and then I walk him home up Route 9 past where Pine Street enters from the north. Alvin's house looks entirely dark and I don't see why he can't have me, but he's emphatic that he can't. He walks me all the way over Pine to where it circles down to Route 30 from Winhall, and then through the grounds of Brattleboro Retreat where Aunt Iona works and back to 3 Chase Street, but though the whole house is dark I still don't want to invite him in. I walk him back to his house. We walk close together, separating if we meet anybody. It's not much but seems to be the best we can do. At his house he insists on walking me back and we take a short cut through side streets. Our voices are muted, but even so have that nighttime timbre that cuts through the dark. Whenever we forget and talk louder, one or the other remembers and lowers his voice. It is a pretty sorry substitute for the real thing, but we are resigned to it. This time when I get home, I say goodnight and go in. The next morning I hitchhike back to Bread Loaf.

-7-

I love the Writer's Conference as much as ever. Skip and I share the staff table, and wait on all the notables, including Bernard DeVoto and Edith Merilees, whose sister is also there this summer as a expert in Educational Writing, but she is much less electrifying than Edith, who continues to lecture like a freight engine gathering steam. Donald Davidson is also on the staff this summer. There's an awkward moment one lunch time when a young Harvard whippersnapper graduate student sits opposite Professor Davidson and baits him on Civil Rights in the South. He started out politely enough, and they were talking congenially until it became clear the Harvard man had positioned himself only to bait Mr. Davidson, who sat opposite, his hands

glazier

in front of him on the table, and gradually the knuckles turned white as the hands became fists. The young squirt became more and more insolent while there was nothing the gentlemanly poet could do but take it. I was standing in back of the braggart with a full pitcher of ice water that I was strongly tempted to tip on his head. But I didn't. And just as well because I would have probably been ordered from the table for carelessness and would never have had that job again, or might even have been ordered to leave the Conference. I doubt I could have mustered the presence of mind to carry it off.

Skip and I continue to be buddies. We attend lectures together, and play a lot of tennis, and roughhouse in Maple Attic. Skip was entirely masculine. He read me letters from his Seattle high school girlfriend, who has become a singer in a nightclub. Sometimes he was able to catch her on a radio special.

For me two high spots of the Conference were the visits of Howard Fast, who had a fellowship, and of Josephine Johnson, who had been invited because her novel Now in November, published last year, had been awarded the Pulitzer Prize. I got acquainted with her when Charlie DuBois, back as a general factotum, got hold of me to say he was driving Howard Fast down to catch the afternoon train. From what I could learn, somebody on the staff thought Fast was too socially active and would profit by taking himself less seriously. I hadn't read anything he wrote, but Charlie said he was invited to be there as a Fellow because of some propaganda stories he had written. And somebody thought it a duty to get him drunk and seduced to see whether his writing wouldn't be improved by loosening up. Somehow, Fast got wind of the plot, and we were going to spirit him away.

Josephine Johnson was in the counterplot. She knew Charlie from his calling square dances at Ripton Town Hall Saturday

nights. I got included simply by the fluke that Charlie knew me from that graduate course we took on Milton.

We barely made the train, and driving back up Depot Street, Josephine remarked on the stately yellow brick mansion across from the Congregational Church, and how much she would like to look inside. I spoke up and said it would be closed to the public at this late afternoon hour, but my friend Israel Smith was the caretaker and perhaps we could stir him up. Charlie also knew John Israel, who, I knew, had replaced Rollin Campbell.

We parked in front of the Community House, and I managed to rouse John Israel by going around and pounding on the back door. He had heard about Josephine Johnson's winning the Pulitzer, and let me in the back door, and we went around front where Charlie and Miss Johnson were waiting. John took us all over the beautiful house. He himself was sleeping in the middle room with the huge bed, so I was able to show off the lovely back bedroom where Larry and I lived, with its canopied bed and fireplace and antique furniture. In doing so, I told her a little of my story, and Charlie told some more, and for the first time she showed an interest in me.

John Israel charmed her with his knowledge of poetry and his acquaintance with her novel, which he seemed to know intimately. He talked as usual in his drawling, effeminate headlong speech. On the way back through the Gorge in East Middlebury, when Charlie asked Josephine what she thought of him, she said without hesitation, "He's the most sincerely affected person I've ever met."

Josephine invited me for walks in the woods, where she was fascinated with great lichens I showed her growing around the bases of trees where the trunks branched down into beginnings of roots supporting the tree from underground. Some lichens were like semicircular upside down platters, that, turned over, had a creamy and soft underside that could become an artist's palette

on which you could draw linear pictures with a stick. I drew her a linear outline of a soft woolly owl sitting on a branch with tufted ears and wing feathers hugged close to his side, his claws firmly grasping the branch on which he sat glowering with huge prismatic eyes. Josephine carried two of the lopsided parasites back to her room, and when we got there I gave her my owl. The next day I found on my bed a drawing of one of the seven dwarfs signed "For Lyle -- Jo."

A couple of days later, I was invited when Charlie drove her to Middlebury to board a train. We three sat in the front seat, Jo in the middle, and I got up courage to squirm my left arm around her shoulder. When I began to feel real chummy and tightened my grip, she gently reached up to my fingers and disengaged them and lifted them away from where they brushed her cheek.

-8-

I can hardly believe it almost at the end, when Untermeyer has given his usual harrangue, and Frost is scheduled next evening, Ted stops me after breakfast as I leave the diningroom and says, "Lyle, Robert would like to start off, answering questions. I wonder if you will jot down one or two and give them to me after lunch." I have never before conceived of anybody's calling Robert Frost Robert!

I go back to the attic and wrack my brains. I think of one without any trouble: "When did you start coming to Bread Loaf, and what does Bread Loaf mean to you?"

I'm not at all satisfied. It's so ordinary. I've got to do better. I labor and labor and come up with a blank. When the other fellows come into the attic, I'm feeling so important I burst out with what I am doing, and invite them to think of a question. Skip levels me with, "The trouble with you, Lyle, is you're so effervescent. Ted didn't appoint you chair of a committee. He asked you to come up with two questions."

He's so dead right. I sneak downstairs and over to the brook and sit beside the swimming hole my mind as dry as a cinder block. I'm on the point of giving up, when it's as if the pen moves in my hand and writes, "When, if ever, will the United States produce a poet who speaks not for one region -- New England or Southern or Western -- but for the whole nation?"

I have just time to run to the Inn to set up my table for lunch. When Ted comes in I slip him the paper.

That evening Frost spends two minutes on the first question but gets his teeth into the second. He discusses his relationship with E. A. Robinson, and tells how the first time they met, they went for a walk and fell silent, and he was stealing glances at Robinson, when he discovered Robinson stealing glances at him. He talks about the Southern Fugitives, and the Hoosiers, and Robinson Jeffers in Carmel, and it's evident all the time in back of his mind, he's not saying what is really there, how much he would like to believe that if he's not already the national poet, he will spend the rest of his life trying to be.

After he ponders the question and does his usual half hour reading, there's a crowd collects around the podium, everybody wanting to reassure him. He's enjoying himself immensely. I'm standing way back in the wings, and Ted spots me and comes over, "Lyle, that was a humdinger. Robert loved it. How would you like to drop in at Treman where he and Louis will be having their yearly conference over what poems will go into the 1937 Modern American Poetry?"

I have never attended one of those fabulous after-lecture Treman coffee hours. I sit with other hoi polloi small fry circled in front of the fireplace. We keep looking over our shoulders at Frost and Untermeyer in deep conversation. Charlie DuBois is there and Ted Franklin and Mim Barber from my class, and Dottie French her sidekick from somewhere down south, and we begin to argue over the New Deal, Charlie and I, the liberals,

and the others defending the anti-Roosevelt conservatives. I have just said, "For the first time in this country somebody is speaking up for Unions." I say it loudly because I've noticed that as we have our eyes on Frost, he has his eye on us.

Ted Morrison comes over and says, "Lyle, I'm ready to go to bed, and Louis hasn't been shown his room. Here's a key to 31 Maple, on the third floor, the first room on the south side at the head of the stairs. Would you be willing to show him?"

I take the key, and we settle back into our debate. In a few minutes, Frost comes over and draws up a chair and listens, Then he says. "You young sprouts like to be earth shakers but I daresay in a few years you'll all turn Tory."

I launch into a tirade how I voted for Norman Thomas and I never intend to moderate my convictions. Frost leaps into the fray, "A little of the Bolshevik, hey?" And I fire back, "Grass roots American socialism isn't Marxist. The trouble with you conservatives you have no sympathy for the masses. You haven't the least idea what it's like to get deeper into the rut year after year."

We have it hot and heavy and I think, well, I've certainly thrown away a chance to put in an oar with Robert Frost.

Frost leaves us and ambles over to Untermeyer and they have some kind of nightcap together. Charlie whispers to me, "You gave him exactly the opening he was looking for." I haven't the foggiest notion what he is talking about.

Frost and Untermeyer come over talking briskly. Frost doesn't seem in the least put out with me. Untermeyer asks if I have his key and will show him where he's supposed to sleep. He is carrying a bulging briefcase, Mim and Dottie say goodnight, and Charlie and I and Ted walk across the street ahead of the old men.

On the third floor, at number 31, I am turning the key in the lock when we hearing a stirring in the room, a creaking of

springs, and a woman's voice yells, "Whoever you are, get away from my door!"

Untermeyer pushes me aside, "Get out of my way! She probably has my anthology on her bedside table waiting for my autograph! I'll autograph her anthology for her!"

Frost is pulling at his coattails. They both retire from the door, and I take the key and say I'll go to the office and find out from the manager where Untermeyer is supposed to sleep. The two of them go into the john, where Frost turns down the toilet cover and Untermeyer boosts himself onto the enameled wash basin. The three of us skip downstairs and meet the night clerk on the run, who grabs the key from me and continues his rescue mission.

After Bread Loaf I have a week out to Gramp's before time to return to Mount Hermon, Gramp has a housekeeper, who has the big bedroom and Gramp is sleeping in the little chamber where we kids always slept. Mrs. Bottom was straight from England, and adored the Royal Family, and in spite of Mrs. Simpson, bridled when she spoke of the Succession: "I love my Prince!"

I visit Gail on his hilltop. One night he serves macaroni with his gourmet hamburger/cheese sauce (Italian style) and it's midnight before I get back to the old house on the Montague/Moores Corner Road. It's like creeping into a cocoon to sneak into the woodshed, on through the back kitchen, then up the crooked staircase past the brook flowing into the green hogshead from the top of the drumlin.

Back in South Crossley and new floor officers, all four last year's graduated. June bidding closed early so many students wanted to live here. We are famous for study hours. Doors are still left open, no visiting between rooms, and no radios. Students still go to their floor officer for permission to go to the john. But there's considerable quiet-voiced conversation between roommates, and I don't interfere so long as their voices are kept down.

Coach Henderson and his wife invite me to dinner and I realize they were newlyweds last year, just returned from their honeymoon when I knocked on their door the first week I was at Mount Hermon. When you go to live in a strange place you have the feeling that everything and everybody you find there except you have been there forever. It's as if this world, new for

you, has simply opened its gate to let you in. And now, I am an insider.

-3-

Gene Link comes over from Middle Crossley and invites me to his afternoon class in Sociology. I have never seen such a class -- organized bedlam. Yet Gene has it under control and every student is engaged in some activity that bears on the direction the class is taking. They are staging a reading of a new play Waiting for Lefty by a young playwright, Clifford Odets, and spend the last part of the hour trying out for parts. Gene has got permission from the playwright to make copies for the reading, and I take back one of the scripts. It's a Depression play about members of a cab drivers labor union holding a meeting to decide whether to strike. It will be easy to stage. The script calls for a bare stage, a room where the crooked union boss is holding a meeting to persuade his drivers not to strike even though it's clear they are being cheated of their fares by a deal between their union boss and Management. The meeting is interrupted from time to time to take looks into the home of one of the drivers and catch the conversation between him and his wife. She is complaining because she and their kids are starving while the cab company is cheating them. I feel like crying because it's so much like Millers Falls Tool Company and the way they treated Pop. The point of the title is they're waiting for a strike leader who never shows up. Right at the end, we learn he has been lured into an alley and shot. The play closes with the labor boss trying to drown out the voices as everybody calls "Strike! Strike!" I doubt if Gene has any idea how much I identify with the strikers.

-4-

A couple weeks after this visit to his class, Gene invites me to Northfield for a cookout with a labor organizer husband and wife team. They are obviously Socialists or maybe Communists. They are nice people with a Mexican name that I don't exactly catch -

- but it sounds like Gootierrez -- Pablo and Maria -- and there are two young children with scrubbed faces and staring brown eyes.

We tank up on a lot of beer, so much so that when we get back to park in front of Middle Crossley, Gene makes a beeline for inside and I follow, fairly splitting my bladder. Inside his john, he rushes for the urinal. I wait till he motions me to join my stream to his, but although I'd been pissing my pants all the way back from Northfield, I can't for the life of me squeeze out a drop under his gaze.

Gene is telling a story, "When I had my first date to take a girl to a movie, we got back on the sofa in her livingroom, and I was getting a terrific hardon, when her father came out of a bedroom in his nightgown, hurried into the bathroom off the front hall, switched on the light and started pissing a full stream into the middle of the bowl. Like that, I lost my erection!" Gene pulls away from the toilet, and leaves the john and I take my turn. Such a relief! I don't know as I ever any time have felt so refreshed and eased.

-5-

Dr. Porter comes to me with a request I stage a play for the sophomores and freshmen. There will be three plays, staged Saturdays before Thanksgiving. A prize will be given for the one getting most votes from the student body. Tom Donovan will stage one for the Seniors, Bob Burdick for the juniors, and I and a new teacher Paul Niblock will have the two lower classes. Tom has always directed the fall play and the spring play, but Dr. Porter wants to loosen up and get some of the younger kids involved. Of course I have no choice but to consent. It soon becomes apparent that Niblock knows nothing about play production and doesn't want to. He leaves the direction to me. I remember a play put on at Middlebury, an uproarious mock trial by George M. Cohan about a bunch of hillbillies in a foolish squabble. I write to Mr. Goodreds and he sends a copy of Common

Clay. It's a one-act, only about fifty pages. Everything is done in syncopated meter. You overdo the beat, three beats to the line:

Is there anything more you wish to say?

There's a glowering judge, a detective and a policeman and a husband and wife yelling over being cheated, and the whole half hour is punctuated with irrational non sequiturs. We do it on a bare stage with a high platform for the judge to sit on in front of a skyblue curtain draped over the back wall of the stage. My stage manager is Jim Polhemus, who has transferred to Hermon from my seventh grade class in Northfield. The part of the judge goes to a heavy set sophomore who, I learn later, has been in some sort of trouble with his housemaster down at Overton. He's actually shy, but is blowsy and loudmouthed and perfect. The only trouble is how to get him furnished with a wig. He comes to my office the day before we put the play on and he's complaining because even with a borrowed black commencement robe, he doesn't feel dressed for a judge. I can see he will be a failure if I don't do something.

I take him over to the campus store and buy a roll of cotton batting. We go back to my room and I unroll the package and work it over, separating the whole length of it into two thin pads that I leave unseparated at the top. Quickly with white thread and needle, I tuck in a few stitches holding them from coming apart. Placed on top of his head, the two curled locks fall to his shoulders. To show him what he looks like, I take him into the john where he can study himself in a mirror. He is so transported by his appearance that he begs to carry the wig back to his room to practice his part and I let him, but warn him not to spoil it by accidentally pulling the strands apart.

Our Saturday after-dinner performance is a success. I see Dr. Porter standing way back at the entrance, and afterward he comes backstage to congratulate us. A day later he takes me aside after lunch and tells me the whole point of the competition was

to try to get new students involved. He was specially pleased because a couple of my actors had been in administrative trouble, and seemed now to be snapping out of it. We don't win first or second prize which go to the seniors and the juniors, whose actors were in the drama club, but Dr. Porter sees to it we get Honorable Mention.

-6-

To my joy, I've gotten rid of Advanced Grammar. I was given a second section of sophomores. Louis Smith asked me to write a short letter of advice to Mr. Niblock who took over. In my letter I don't mention the bad time I had last year the first day of class, but try to cover how easy it was when I worked chiefly not only chapter by chapter from the book but had them bring their papers with corrections from teachers who were failing them for composition mechanics. We synchronized between the books and their corrected homework.

-7-

I seem to be running into Mr. Niblock everywhere. Although he is an English teacher, he is an assistant coach, not in the least, I think, interested in creative expression. Dr. Porter asks both of us to give a brief talk at an assembly on techniques for working your way through college. We have a half hour between us, and Niblock goes first and gives a textbook analysis complete with footnotes instead of talking out of his own experience. I think he must have gone to the library and found a book about it. I had planned to say something about working in the tool factory for a year to save money before going to Middlebury and about bellhopping in the Middlebury Inn and taking care of the Payne boys afternoons, but I don't have time for any extended discussion and confine myself to the technique of baby sitting faculty children. I get quite a laugh when I pull out of my pocket an oversized white handkerchief and demonstrate how to fold it and apply it to a wiggling nine months old baby who needs to have diapers changed.

In October, Leon Dunnell calls me and invites me to go to a series of Sunday night concerts, two at Smith College and two at Mount Holyoke. He has tickets and invites me for dinner at Wiggins Old Tavern in Northampton, and afterward we go to the recital at Smith or over to South Hadley. Except for a concert by Myra Hess that Mrs. Swift gave Larry and me tickets for in the Congregational Church at Middlebury, I never attended concerts by professional artists. For Myra Hess, Larry and I had seats in the balcony, looking down on the stage where we could see her pudgy fingers as she hunched over the keys. She was wearing a short sleeved dress, and I was impressed with her upper arms, as muscular as a blacksmith's. She could lift high for great crashing chords, or with the greatest delicacy could draw hardly audible pianissimo from the keys.

This Smith/Mount Holyoke series is the first I ever attended, and to have four first-rate concerts fairly drives me out of my mind. I am astonished by the casualness with which the audience accepts the opportunity. They seem to take it for granted. I noticed at Mount Holyoke how the girls wear their jewels and full evening dress, while at Smith they wear pullover sweaters and dungarees.

Back at Mount Hermon, I invite Leon up to my room. We walk quietly through the sleeping dormitory to the second floor, and without talking go into my bedroom and half strip and take each other manually and then pull our clothes together, a bit sheepish with what we have done. We are not in love with each other, but in our moment of passion I love him. Afterward I see him downstairs to his car.

Betty Woodruff and I were invited to an evening of Bridge at Bill and Anne Morrrows' in Overton. The Morrrows were considered semi-professionals but were close crowded by the Baxters from North Crossley. The rest of us were strung out from indifferent

to dudds, in which category Betty and I surely belonged except for one hand when I had three aces, matching three kings and the Joker. In the off suit I had the Queen, Jack and a slew of small ones. We were playing against the Baxters. I bid six no trump, and Henry said witheringly, "Nobody in his right mind ever bids six no trump!" He doubled and I tripled, while Betty looked dismayed. The tables around stopped to watch, Everybody was sorry for me. I threw out a small card in my off suit where Betty played her king and Henry slammed down the ace, and I was lucky enough to have him lead into my queen. Then i got the ten with my jack, and I knew we had them. I never knew how it happened but in spite of that cosmic score, the Baxters won the prize for the evening. I was so elated at the success of my outrageous bid that I didn't challenge the score keeper.

It was that night Ann Morrow told me I'd better watch out because she met Esther Williamson at a party in Northfield, and Esther had "set her cap" for me. I didn't think much of it, because I was not in the least interested in that middleaged woman in spite of her great house in Northfield.

-10-

Amy Niles and I started to write more often. We had been writing off and on since she went to London on the Dutton Fellowship and we started a scattering of literary exchanges, sharing poems we both were writing. After returning from London, she hadn't found a job and spent a year on the Bennington farm, then went to Brown where she earned a Master's Degree in a year. I was impressed with her graduate courses, one under Professor Anderson who summers at Bread Loaf taught Middle English, and one on Spenser from S. Foster Damon who was famous for a book on Metaphor and Symbolism. In the John Carter Brown Library she was reading eighteenth century British travelers accounts of America. She seemed oceans and light years ahead of my elementary and secondary teaching. But after graduating at Brown, even she hadn't been able to get a job

teaching. She spent the summer in Boston, taking a secretarial course at Simmons, rooming with one of the two Heald girls who had been in our class.

In Boston, she was close to the Cary Teachers' Agency, and wrote me she'd got a job teaching English and Latin in a small high school in Mendon, Massachusetts, twenty miles or so southeast of Worcester. From there her letters began to come more frequently, and I found myself accepting an invitation to spend Saturday afternoon and evening with her along toward the end of October. I planned my bus schedule to arrive in early afternoon, but when I got to Greenfield to take a late morning bus, I discovered it was interstate Greyhound and wouldn't allow me to change in Springfield for a transfer to Worcester. When the Bus arrived, the driver explained he could carry only travelers who had tickets for Connecticut or beyond. After the bus left it occurred to me that I could have got a ticket for the first stop across the state line, and simply got out in Springfield. I had to telephone Amy and tell her the earliest I could arrive would be close to five-thirty, so our plan for a fall afternoon together was shattered.

I had not seen her since our graduation three years before. She was the same -- shy and somewhat awkward -- but we had a good time under the hospitality of her landlady Mrs. Brown, who served her husband and teenage daughter Hazel and us a New England Saturday night supper of baked beans, brown bread, cabbage salad, pumpkin pie and sage cheese. She refused our help with the dishes, saying that was Hazel's chore.

We walked through the small town -- a three-decker kindergarten-through-twelfth-grade school, general store, white church and a handful of houses. Except for the school, it could have been Moores Corner. There was no sylvan glen or murmuring waterfall so we sat under a maple tree along a dirt road bordering a cow pasture and watched the sun set behind an ensilage cutter alongside a horsebarn -- in our foreground the farmhouse with geranium window boxes, a barking dog, some hissing geese and clucking hens.

We protected ourselves from romantic digressions by indulging in a screen of discourse about poetry, classroom technique, and Bread Loaf, where I was eloquent about my two summers. It turned out Amy had been there as a Middlebury junior and had, among others, Hervey Allen as a teacher just before he became famous with Anthony Adverse, of which she had an autographed copy. She spoke of possibly enrolling for next summer to take a course in creative writing with Theodore Morrison whom I had been praising. I was not sure how pleased I should be with the prospect of intimacy for a whole summer at Bread Loaf together. At least she would not be hoi polloi.

We lingered until the housewife lighted a kerosene lamp on the table inside her kitchen window.

-11-

With Gram dead and Gramp with a housekeeper, there is no Thanksgiving planned for this year. Shortly before the holiday I have a call from Esther Williamson inviting me for oldfashioned Thanksgiving with her in New Hampshire up in the hills above Ashuelot, where the Morgan family originated before her father moved to Northfield. From what she says it will be a back country Thanksgiving like the gatherings at Gramp's in the old days. Because I have no other plans and Esther is urgent, I accept. Actually, taken off guard, I find it hard to say no to anybody who takes a firm initiative in controlling my life.

Esther says, "You'll meet my uncles and aunts and their children and grandchildren by the dozens, and you've never met my eleven-year-old Ursula, who'll be riding with me and her grandparents."

When I get to the Morgan's at eight o'clock Thursday morning, I approach the house with some foreboding. For me it has always been one of the great houses of Northfield associated in my mind with money and power. Because I remember what Anne Morrow said about Esther's "setting her cap for you" I am on guard.

The big livingroom to which she admits me looks even more luxurious with sofas, chairs, polished tables and floor lamps arranged for family living not for a drama club meeting. Ursula, a skinny girl with braces to straighten her front teeth, is standing in front of the fireplace, scared looking as if primed for a significant occasion. She and I don't say much more than "Hello" and Esther seems relieved to announce that everybody is ready to start. Ursula rides in front between her grandparents while Esther and I sit in back. There's a good deal of polite talk from front seat to back seat with the old folk. Thanksgiving itself is our topic. They ask if my family celebrate Thanksgiving, and I tell them it's our great celebration, but my grandmother, who always entertained for Thanksgiving, died two years ago. I'm glad to grasp the opportunity to describe the old days and our festivities in the old 1774 house in Moores Corner.

Mrs. Morgan says, "That's just like the way we do. We've always had a family gathering. You'll meet Esther's folks from back in the Ashuelot hills. They'll talk your ears off with Revolutionary War battles. The Green Mountain Boys were not alone in fighting the Battle of Bennington. General Stark's volunteers had plenty enlisted from Hinsdale, Ashuelot, and Winchester, though they never were given full credit."

When she gets into the car, Esther plants herself in the middle of the back seat, and just before we get to Hinsdale, she

reaches over and touches my hand as she embroiders an anecdote about Great Uncle Elias. She lets her hand rest there and I turn mine over and she squeezes my fingers. Just then we turn off the main road onto a bumpy side road, which throws us together or apart as we strike thankyoumarms and wheel ruts climbing the mountain. By the time we reach the hill farm with its fences and outhouses and central chimneyed Cape Codder, we have lost our best behavior and are disheveled but chummy.

Her brother Ed. has driven from somewhere south of Boston where he has a church affiliation. At table, he leads us in prayer. Except for that, it is very much like out to Gramp's. Ursula was taken in tow by her teen cousins, and we see no more of her until time to go home. I sit at table with the grownups and realize that by staying at Middlebury through the holidays I had missed the transition from childhood to main table that must have gone on in Moores Corner.

Everybody is attentive, I sit with Esther. Her Aunt Rebecca puts it for everybody, "We're all family, and you are part of the family."

On the way home after dark, Esther snuggles against me. When she places her hand on my cock, and I start to get an erection, I am not ready for it, and gently disengage her fingers, and hold them clasped in mine. Although I'm invited in for a night cap, I plead duty. I have to get back for bedcheck for students who have not been able to leave campus. When Esther offers to drive me to Hermon, I say I have to go up to say hello to Clayt and Abby, who are still living over the drugstore at the corner of Main and Parker Avenue. It's a flimsy excuse to have Clayton drive me home to South Crossley.

Chapter Eleven

-1-

i spend most of Christmas vacation at Hermon, working in Professor Stark's sky parlor that he has made available for my writing, afternoons. I go in through their kitchen to the door opening on three flights of stairs to the glassed-in room in a cupula looking in four directions over the campus and the landscape beyond. To the southeast over the Connecticut River I can see as far as Northfield Farms and the plateau where we lived in a shanty below the mountain. To the southwest the view stretches toward Turners Falls and Greenfield, both shrouded in haze, to the west toward Bernardston, below the horizon, and to the north over a forested hill toward West Northfield and across the river to the east, Northfield Seminary too far to be seen.

i try not to be distracted by the view, but sit at the desk, pen in hand, scratching out fragments of poems, or dawdling over narratives. Right now I'm working on a short story based on that evening at Bread Loaf when Ted Morrison and I walk on toward the pitch up toward the Long Trail and Silent Cliff to where the road pitches down to Hancock.

I'm trying to make a story out of the mixed emotions that swept over me as Ted and I stood looking down at the phosphorescent moss held in his hand. The beauty of the moss and the fact the phosphorescence is a sign of decay is the mix I am after to combine with what I am feeling for Ted -- an attraction that is pure and deep but based on sex and therefore a social taboo. I grope to comprehend Ted's feelings for me. I call the story, "The Beauty of Things that are Rotten."

It slides toward the no conclusion of our parting at the top of the hill outside his room when he invites me in for a

nightcap and I slip away from whatever he has or does not have in his mind, uncertain also whatever I have in my own

-2-

A week before Christmas Day, I get a postcard from Gramp: "Dear Lyle,

I'm getting so old I can't do anything right. Last week I sent a card to the gas station in Montague and told him to come fill my ass tank. I'm writing to invite you for Christmas."

It's the first time I ever had a message written by Gramp. Gram always did the writing.

The day before Christmas I go over to Northfield and catch the CV passenger train and get off at Montague station and walk over the back road to where it swings down to join the main road a half mile below Gramp's North Leverett water mill.

Mrs. Bottom has bought a chicken she will roast tomorrow, and she has made a plum pudding. We sit after supper and I tell them of my houseboy at Hermon, who comes in every morning to clean my apartment and send out my laundry. He is from India, the son of missionaries, and hasn't been home for two years. Gramp asks what he is doing for Christmas. And I say, "As far as I know he will eat at the school."

Mrs. Bottom says, "Both of the bedrooms upstairs are made up. I wish we could get him. I wonder if he has ever been inside an old house like this one."

The upshot is that I drive to Hermon in Gramp's car and find Si Montrose in his dorm and on a hunch, swing down to the farmhouse and pick up Larry, and arrive back at Gramp's with both boys. They sleep together in the room at the top of the stairs, and I have Aunt Maud's room looking out over the side door.

We all pitch in to help Mrs. Bottom with peeling potatoes, boiling onions and her brussel sprouts, and last night on the

way back from Hermon I stopped to buy cranberries, and it's a great Christmas. After breakfast the next day, the boys and I walk to Montague station and take the train back to Northfield, and Clayton drives us to Hermon.

It crossed my mind I could have brought only Si and we could have slept in one bed together. It could have led to something. When I went on to look for Larry, I suppose I was partly protecting myself from that option

-3-

In my two sophomore classes second semester I decide to get away from Woolley's Handbook of Grammar and see if I can loosen up our composition assignments by introducing the boys to creative writing.

I try to persuade them to write short essays remembering their childhood. When we read A Shropshire Lad, I encourage them to write reminiscent lyrics. The best I get come from a lunkhead, either plagiarist or genius. He writes two or three little ditties. Very nice. I'm afraid they are cribbed. I go to the library. There are too many possible sources. I can't track them down from anywhere, and really don't want to. I encourage the boys to read their work in class. But he won't read his poems.

A tall, lanky boy in my first class suggests we type up the work in a small book. "We could call it 'Springtime at Mount Hermon,' or something descriptive." He sets up a committee. I turn over the best poems and prose to them. I get permission from Administration to have the typescript duplicated on the office ditto machine. The boy's mother hears about it and writes to me from Pleasant Valley out beyond Albany. She is excited about what we are doing, and wants us to be sure to have a copy placed in the Library.

-4-

As a working student with free board and room, Larry is rooming in the farmhouse ell above the milkroom. The hired

hands have a changing room upstairs, and Larry and two other boys have their room in an attic back of the changing room. The men are careless about laundering their soiled clothes, and the stench of sour milk is overpowering. Larry seems used to it but when I go down to visit him, I clear out in a hurry. It bothers me that any student has to put up with such conditions. I'm tempted to go see Dr. Porter and tell him we are failing. The whole Hermon work program seems corrupted by the filth Larry and his roommates endure. Every student has an assigned job to wait on table, clean room for a housemaster, work on the lawns, be houseboy in a faculty home, Etc.. The D. L. Moody tradition requires students to contribute to the cost of keeping them at Hermon, but we have no right to exploit them.

It happens that soon after I visit Larry, Dr. Porter calls me to his office. "Lyle, I often have from an alumnus or friend a gift that i'm free to spend as I think best. I have just received such a donation of five hundred dollars and wonder if you have a suggestion how I should spend it."

It crosses my mind immediately to invite him to go with me to visit the working student dormitory over the milkroom. I could just invite him to go for a walk and take him there. I don't do it. It could seem nepotism for me to get special help for my brother, and I don't think the boys would appreciate an unexpected inspection from the Headmaster.

I don't come up with a suggestion how to spend \$500.

A month or so later, Dr. Porter tells me the Administration will remodel my office and bedroom during summer vacation. He invites me to make suggestions. I suggest a small office just inside the door of my large south room, and closing off the rest of the space for a well furnished living/bedroom with private bath. I gather that my plan doesn't meet with his approval. He likes better to have the entire space refurnished so I will have a homelike atmosphere for the students to enter whenever they visit me. I see immediately the reasonableness of his plan. He

is thinking of the welfare of the students, where I was thinking only of a refuge for myself, more like the Henderson apartment where they hide away by locking their door.

-5-

I hear from Aunt Ruth that Evelyn has gone to New York to become a nurse. I get her address and invite her to meet me at the bus depot the Saturday before Easter and we will have dinner and go to see PORGY AND BESS with music by George Gershwin. She writes back immediately accepting.

I go by way of Springfield, stopping over with the Wilsons. Roxy has died of childbirth, and Raymond has given up his job at the downtown newsstand and is baby sitting the infant Pete and one-and-a-half year old Rose at John Proctor's at 357 Newbury Street, around the corner from 111 Hastings. When I get to the bus stop in early afternoon, I call the Wilsons' and get Ray's father, who gives me Ray's number. I call him and go immediately there. The baby is asleep in a crib, and Ray is giving Rose a bath. I think he's partly showing off for me. Rose is in the tub splashing water, churtling. She adores her uncle, and he worships her. He takes her out onto a clean towel, wraps her in it, dries her, sprinkles her with talcum powder, turns her on her stomach and dries and powders her, puts on fresh diapers, a rubber diaper cover, draws her arms through a bunny rabbit bath robe, and sits rocking her. She is eyeing me with suspicion.

Ray says, "That's Lyle. That's your cousin Lyle."

She gurgles.

It's obvious he loves what he is doing and is good at it. I decide he's not showing off, this is his metier. He's being a perfect mother. Last year at the newspaper kiosk I thought he was capable and had a certain assertive control over customers. But this is different. He is in his element. When John comes home at 5:30, Rose is taking a nap, the baby has been fed and changed, and John's macaroni and cheese is in the oven, a salad

made, and a store-bought apricot pie in the warming oven. Water is heating for coffee, the table is set, the newspaper on the end table beside the easy chair, and John's slippers ready for John to step into them. It's really too bad he can't rub John's aching back and sooth his complaints about a hard day at the office. But, actually, Ray puts on a masculine, man-to-man air, discusses plans for tomorrow, and he and I leave through the crisp air for supper with the Wilsons. Mae has come home from the office, and George has supper ready. Except that he lacks Raymond's effeminacy, there's a similarity between his role and his son's. He's alcoholic, can't hold a steady job. Mae and George treat me as if I'm doing them honor by coming to visit.

After supper I mention that my former bellhop friend Bill Lieson lives in Springfield and at Ray's suggestion, give a call and he comes over. To my surprise he and Ray get on well. Bill is working as a teller in the bank where his dad was manager. He isn't married. He and Ray arrange to meet sometime for dinner and a show. I'm astonished, because I started out the evening feeling I should apologize for my cousin. I'm not envious. Bill shows interest in my work at Mount Hermon, but I'll probably never see him again.

One of Ray's problems is his foreskin is so closed like a purse he has never been able to draw it down over his glans. I would help him but he only yells how it hurts. I tell him it's unhealthy to have all that crud and advise him to go to a doctor, it'll be a simple matter to have it cut, but it's almost as if he prefers to be the way he has always been. He starts to cry and I cuddle him, and we end up having sex but it's no great fun.

I stay another day, sleeping late and after breakfast with George, stop by Bob Senecal's at 309 Newbury on the way to 357 where John Proctor lives. A boy in the dooryard tells me Bob has gone away. He doesn't know where. I go on to spend the morning with Ray and his babies. There is nothing for me to do

because Ray has everything routinized and won't let me help him. I go into the bathroom and masturbate, and come out and tell him I did. He looks hurt as if I have personally dealt him a blow. I go back to Hastings street for lunch with George and spend the afternoon reviewing Thackeray's Henry Esmond that I will be teaching again. I still find it slow moving and even the American part of it won't be enough to rouse much interest in my students. I decide to put my main emphasis on creative writing. Perhaps I can stir up enough interest between the two classes to turn out a book of original poems, essays, and short stories. I like the idea.

When Ray comes home, we have time before dinner to go up to the bedroom, where he would like to have sex. It's as if I want to punish him. I let him touch me but refuse to touch him. He becomes passionate and frustrated. We hear Mae come home. She calls upstairs, "Ray, Lyle. Dinner in a half hour."

Ray begins to cry. He is like a woman crying. I'm contemptuous. Suddenly he is writhing on the bed. It's like Bob Burdick's seizure after the ballgame. I hurry downstairs and sit reading the paper. George and Mae are busy talking over their day and fixing dinner. She goes to call Ray. I say, "I think he's sick."

She give me a strange look and rushes upstairs. After a few minutes George joins her. They are gone a long time. I turn off the oven.

When they come down, they look tired out. Mae says, "He's resting comfortable." We eat the potroast in almost total silence.

I say, "There's an evening bus to New York. Maybe I'd better take it."

They don't object, and I go up for my luggage. Ray is in a deep sleep and doesn't notice.

Back downstairs, George and Mae apologize. "He must have had a bad day. This is his first attack in a long time. He

thinks the world of you. You be sure to come again whenever you can." It's clear they're relieved I'm not staying over night.

-6-

I stay at the International House, have a late breakfast, and in the afternoon decide to go by myself to Minskis and see what it is really like. I am dressed in slacks and my white Middlebury crosscountry sweater with the M on it.

I don't enjoy the show as much as I thought I would. There's the same kind of gumshoe clown Rawl and I saw, the same oversized loaf of bread and the redhaired lady being poked under her skirts when she stoops to adjust her garter. I have to go to the john but can hardly get in the door, there's such a crowd inside. The place is thick with cigarette smoke. All the urinals are taken, and when I stand in line at one of them, an old man is looking back at me over his shoulder, and seems to be inviting me to join him. I am too scared to do so. I leave in a hurry and go back to the Y for a piss.

We arranged for Evelyn to pick me up there. She is living with a family in Brookline, and the husband has suggested an Italian restaurant. We have a very good dinner, with lots of spaghetti and a peppery sauce making my eyes water.

Evelyn is as excited as I am about seeing the opera. We have good seats in the balcony and can look down on the stage and hear perfectly and see everything. I like all the actors, especially the young black man who plays Porgy and the soprano who plays Bess. I would be hard put to say which song I like best. "I got plenty of nuttin'" practically pulls me out of my seat, but "Summertime" is the one that drives me crazy. Evelyn and I keep looking at each other in admiration. When the story takes its downturn, it is almost more than either of us can bear. It's the music that makes it bearable. I don't think I ever before saw so many negroes. There are not many in the audience, but the stage is full of them. I am in love with them

all, and I think Evelyn is too. We are two country bumpkins bugeyed at our introduction to all that jazz, both the actors and the music. It is better than any movie I ever saw, and that's saying something, because from my first movie in Redmen's Hall in Millers Falls I never had less than total involvement in what was going on on the screen. But here in the theater, you are inside not outside the action.

-7-

Shortly before term end, Gene Link forms a committee to create a Mount Hermon Teachers' Union. We can go AF-of-L, CIO, or a combination of both. Ten or a dozen of us are in the group. We elect a combination AFL/CIO. On the day after final exams, Gene calls us together to hear his Declaration of Principle. It's so garbled nobody can make sense out of it. As an English teacher, I'm called on to rewrite it, and I stay after the meeting and leave my revised copy with Gene. We agree to have him copy it and mail the revised statement to each member for our signatures, or our suggestions.

-8-

On a rainy night in late May I take my after-study-hour stroll west of Crossley along the south edge of Shadow Lake and on into the woods. Just before midnight I come out of the trees up grade past the Headmaster's house directly under the window through which Elliott Speers was shot. My raincoat collar is turned up and the brim of my fedora down over my eyes. From there I slog north around the east end of West Hall down past Camp Hall on the long sidewalk to Crossley Hall.

I peel off my wet clothes, take a shower and sink into sleep. Around 5 o'clock there's a knock on my door. Pulling my bathrobe around me, I stumble from bedroom to office, turn on the light and open to a State Police Officer in uniform.

He asks politely, "May I please use your phone?"

He's apparently talking to another trooper: "Did you come across anything, Jim?"

Long pause for the crackle of a voice at the other end, then "Well, that goes for me, too. Nothing stirring here." He puts down the phone.

I ask, "What's that about?"

"Last night in Greenfield around 11:30, somebody held up S. A. Norton your ex-treasurer when he drove into his dooryard. He claims it was a man with a sawed-off shotgun."

"Lucky you didn't see me around midnight come out of the woods in the rain past Ford Cottage with my collar turned up and my hat pulled over my eyes. You'd've thought you had your man."

He backed out of my door, "Thanks for using your phone."

It was beginning to dawn on me why he had gone out of his way, with all the phones on campus, to come to use mine.

-8(b)-

Greenfield Recorder May 26 carries a report that Norton and wife had spent Wednesday evening at a meeting of Northfield chapter of the Congregational Club. After 11 pm, Norton let his wife out at the front door at 71 Haywood Street, then drove into the garage, where former Dean Elder stepped out of the shadows with a shotgun and challenged him: "Get back into the car! I want to talk to you." An agile man, Norton leaped behind a low wall connecting house and garage, made it inside the front door, which he locked and bolted, then put out the lights. A woman lady across the street reported that she saw a man with gun pointed at Norton scurrying to his car.

-8(c)-

Greenfield Recorder, May 27: Elder in Greenfield jail, having not opposed extradition from New Hampshire.

-8(d)-

Recorder, June 3: Court hearing. Elder claimed he and his wife spent night of May 26 at Eagle Hotel in Keene, NH. Chambermaid claims only one person slept in the bed. Also in Keene, all night garageman reports a man looking like Elder alone in a car early in morning bought tankful of gas.

-8(e)-

Greenfield Recorder: court hearing. Norton reports old grudge between him and Elder. Norton's office next to that of Elder's secretary, Miss Dill. Norton made hole in wall between his desk and Miss Dill's office. Saw Elder waiting for Miss Dill one morning, enter office with her and embrace her. Under cross examination indicated to court the approximate height of the hole, and demonstrated how he got on his knees and peeked through the hole and saw the two of them kissing.

-8(f)-

Recorder, hearing cont'd. Norton reported the incident to Headmaster Cutler, who summoned Elder and Norton his office, where the three men got down and prayed. Miss Dill not invited.

-8(g)-

Recorder. Evidence that immediately after murder of Elliott Speer, Elder produced forged document, claiming it was from Speer praising Elder and specifying him as Speer's choice for his successor in the event of sudden death.

-8(h)-

I leave for Bread Loaf. Have word later that the case against Elder was dismissed for lack of specific evidence. It was all hearsay. Elder was freed from jail.

-9-

I get a letter from Gene with my revision of the statement of principle and realize that what I revised is an agreement to support the national trade union bosses in all litigation whether or not I approve. I send my resignation from the chapter, saying that I refuse to pledge allegiance to AFL/CIO.

BOOK II.12WICKED...and Spotless as the Lamb

Bread LoafChapter Twelve

-1-

On the campus bus to the Boston/Maine station in West Northfield (East Northfield Station), I sit with my student Greg Newton, who tells me he's going to East Dorset. I'm going to spend a few days with Gramma Briggs, Uncle Forrest, and Aunt Iona in Brattleboro before going to Bread Loaf.

Greg and I gab so much that I no sooner see the train pull out from Brattleboro than I realize I left my portable typewriter in the car.

Gramma says to wait till Forrest and Iona get home. By the time they do, I have phoned Greg and learned he found the typewriter under the seat in front of where I was sitting.

Aunt Iona says, "Don't worry. Saturday morning I'll drive you to East Dorset." She's a nurse working full time at Brattleboro Retreat. Gramma is keeping house and taking care of little Wallace and Lorraine. Uncle Forrest has a job as carpenter at the Retreat. I catch on that I'm not to go visit Aunt Blanche and Uncle Chester over on Chapin Street because Blanche isn't speaking to Forrest since he got a divorce from Aunt Flossie.

-2-

Iona makes a party of our trip to get the typewriter. On the way back just above Brattleboro, we swing onto a side road, and she surprises me by turning in to the grounds of an estate. I never before heard of Naulakha, the American home of Rudyard Kipling. There is a college boy caretaker from Princeton University. He shows us the great fireplace in the livingroom with its inscription: "The Night Cometh when no Man Can Work." I like him so much I would like to ask if he has a free afternoon when he could come downtown to have lunch, but I don't

because I don't want Aunt Iona to catch on how much I'm attracted to him.

The next day I see an announcement in the REFORMER that a little theater group is making scenery for their next production, and would like volunteers for the stage crew. I know I won't be there for the performance but I wander over and hang around for a while where they're hammering away on the set, but I don't have nerve to speak up and ask if they could use a hand. What would they think if I tell them I'm only here for a couple of days?

-3-

I don't hitch hike to Middlebury but go in style by train, and catch a ride up the mountain on the Bread Loaf mail coach. When I go to the front desk to register, the first person I see is Amy Niles, coming out of the diningroom. She looks cool, and scrubbed and fragile.

I call to her, "Did you have a good lunch?"

She says, "I've been waiting for Ted Morrison to finish lunch. He was late, then let his food get cold, while he recited the Prologue to the Canterbury Tales. He's translating it into modern English for some publisher. He recited the original."

"Oh, I'd like to hear him."

"You wouldn't if you had him at your table."

We go outside and hang our legs over the edge of the porch.

"I didn't suppose you would be hoi polloi."

"I don't have that much money."

"I've been assigned to Gilmore to hell and gone up a back road, to room with Skip Henryson. He has to make a fire in the fireplace of the common room cold nights and mornings."

Dottie and Dick Gould come along. Catching sight of me, Dottie sings out, "Lyle, we're having our first cookout tomorrow after supper. Over at the edge of the brook. Be sure to come."

I start to introduce Amy.

Dottie says, " Goodbye, Lyle, for now. Be sure to come to the cookout." She and Dick go on.

I feel good about this illustration I'm in strong with the Hoi Polloi. I sense Amy feels snubbed. I'm sure Dottie didn't mean to. They are entirely different. Dottie is so witty and popular, and Amy quiet and withdrawn, opposites of each other. This bothers me because Dottie and Dick last year were organizers for hoi polloi cookouts and parties and I wonder if Amy will prove to be a ball and chain if she's the same loner she was all the way through college. At Bread Loaf I have been taken into the main swing and I wouldn't like anything to spoil it.

-4-

By Monday night most hoi polloi have arrived. When I fall in with Amy, I learn that she isn't going: "I'm not invited."

"Of course you are. It's a hoi polloi party."

She seems to think she isn't, and I have a choice of staying with her or joining the others. She encourages me to go along with the gang, and I do.

-5-

To Gilmore is a good half mile through a path over the brook east of the Inn and along the side road . There are a couple of girls in one of the three rooms, and a married couple in another. Skip and I have the big front chamber. It's quiet there and I like rooming with Skip. He has carried over from last year an exaggerated opinion of my talents. He is also the same big bear of a boy and hardly before we stow our clothes in the closet, he is on my bed wrestling me. We go to it hammer and tong as if our life depended on pinning the other.

After that first cookout I can't find Amy. On our way back to Gilmore, Skip encounters fireflies. The little buggers are opening and shutting their tail lights along the road and in meadows. It's like a miniature fireworks display covering acres of meadow and woodland both sides the road. I'm used to it but

Skip goes crazy trying to catch the insects and watch them crawl on his hands and arms lighting their lanterns. He's like a kid in a blueberry patch or a girl on a hillside embroidered with trailing arbutus. He wants to possess the whole lot as if he could own them. He can't get enough of the fireflies. When we finally get to Gilmore, he finds an empty quart jar, and pulls me back with him and we fill the jar halfful with hundreds of crawling black midgets. He thinks that all night we will be dazzled with our roomful of little Leyden jars. We empty the quart jar on the bed, and have insects crawling over us and up the wall and on the ceiling, but they seem to have lost their inspiration. They scarcely light up at all, and by morning have crawled into the woodwork, or maybe found a way back outdoors.

-6-

I need only 5 credits to graduate, and am taking Yale Professor Walter Pritchard Eaton's course in Modern American Drama and Donald Davidson's Plato, and for the extra credit Leonora Branch helped me persuade Harry Owen to let me take over again her Training of Literary Judgment and be her resident artist guru to provide poetic examples for the class to ponder, and pontificate on the artist as a young man.

I'm a bit put out with Professor Eaton for having circulated entrance requirements that candidates for his class must have read all twenty-two Restoration and eighteenth century plays in Types of English Drama, 1660-1780 and all 23 plays in Representative British Dramas Victorian and Modern and all 28 plays in Representative American Plays from 1767 to the Present Day. After I spent a good part of second semester at Mount Hermon covering the assignment, I couldn't find anybody at Bread Loaf who had even looked at one of the three books. And he never mentioned one of the plays in class. But all the same he was a great teacher with firsthand stories about the American theatre from the very late nineteenth century to the present day. He took you right back to Provincetown and Broadway to

cover the development of Eugene O'Neill and seemed to have personally watched the production of plays by Sidney Kingsley and Maxwell Anderson and Thornton Wilder and Arthur Miller and all the great moderns. He seems to have sat in rehearsals and visited actors back stage as well as attended preBroadway tryouts of many important plays in New Haven. I really didn't mind having read all those requirements, especially the Restoration and Eighteenth Century ones. Some of the Nineteenth century ones were more educational than illuminating or entertaining.

I find Plato very deep. We use the two volume Jowett and try as I could, I can't seem to find any logical thread to follow though most of the Dialogues. Just when I think I have the right handle, Socrates veers off in a new direction. Even Davidson's explanations are baffling, because he takes us piecemeal through one of the dialogues without enlightening us with the thread that holds it together. I personally am flattered to think I am venturing into such deep waters, but I seem to be coming away with fragments -- like the parable of the Cave, and, of course, Socrates' famous Apologia -- but if I should be asked to plot the central theme and development of any one of Plato's reconstructions of Socrates I would be hard pressed. Sometimes I wonder if Plato fully understood Socrates. And I try hard not to have doubts about Donald Davidson.

-7-

In Leanora Branch's course I love having her ask whether I have written a new poem for today. I have an excuse to read one like, for example, this one I particularly like:

So much glory gone to seed
because the mind will not confess
the earth has any earthly need

of flaunting so much loveliness:

a maple's bleeding fingertips,
crocuses shouting gold aloud,
a boy with April on his lips,
the smell of gardens freshly plowed:

all of this identified,
one part of sky, two parts of soil,
the heart betrayed, splendor denied
before the senses can recoil.

One student raises her hand to say, "What I like is the way Lyle's poetry is always so masculine." That really slays me. Most of the discussion is over whether or not my poem is "metaphysical" and that leads to whether in this case "metaphysical" means in the tradition of Donne and Marvell? or "metaphysical" in a philosophical sense, and whether I am a naturalist or a super-naturalist? Some think that whether or not I intend it, there's a deep religious content in the poem.

-8-

Part way along in the session, we hoi polloi meet in the small cottage across the croquet ground north of Little Theatre to discuss whether to put on our annual spoof of the summer school. While Dottie Gould and especially Dottie's aggressive husband Dick are arguing heatedly mostly in favor, I'm scribbling on a scrap of paper and at the same time listening to suggestions that different members of the gang could be invited to display their talent for reciting funny poems or story telling, or in the case of Myrtle Spicer, if she wants to so much, let her display her operatic skill. Meanwhile I continue to scribble:

Of Bread Loaf's gastronomies and the [speed] zeal
of that [immortal]

[immoral] infernal crew whose mortal haste
brings food unto [the]
 our guests, and all [our] their woe
 [curdles inside (their) our palate and (their) our]
 with loss of appetite and castor oil
 [that prompts]
 causing a run on johns, sing heavenly muse
that from the [dreadful] aweful brink of Silent Cliff
 [sends] beams down its
 [rays and Heav'ns Gifted Offspring]
 [blessing]
 radiance till one greater man
 [redeems with yearly]
 [saves us with yearly lecture on Italian art],
 [rises to preach his yearly lecture]
vouchsafes to lecture on Italian art:
How Ghirlandaio hissed to Lippo Lippi,
"Please, sir, another helping of potato..."

I break into the debate, which seems to have struck a snag but has definitely decided not as in other years to give a parody of Gilbert and Sullivan or Shakespeare's Midsummer Night's Dream. They want a talent show and are having trouble locating talent. I read my poem, and to my surprise, am greeted with cheers.

Dottie Gould will act as Master of Ceremonies. We hardly have to rehearse, because she simply works out a patter to splice together the different acts. We have one rehearsal. It's decided that we'll all be sitting on stage and Dottie at a podium gives her coordinating patter. Dick Gould, dressed in a baby bonnet and gown, comes in carrying a placard reading "Prologue" and delivers my poem. He's got a rope tied around his waist, and Skip Henryson off stage keeps breaking into the recitation by yanking Dick offstage, till he staggers on again.

I'm disappointed because with all that pulling and hauling nobody can really hear the words of the prologue. We have a fairly decent guitarist, and a barber shop quartet, and somebody gives a romantic reading of "Trees" and somebody else does a parody of Eddie Guest. The rest of us don't have anything to do except sit in a chair on stage in the second row and make faces or grin.

To my surprise, Dick Gould gets an uproarious reception. Most of the acts are well received. It turns out that Myrtle Spicer has chosen an operatic air all trills and leaps and runs to demonstrate her technique, which is considerable. Every time her voice leaps to a high pitch, as it does frequently, it becomes a screech, and from the second row, where I'm visible, after the first peacock shrill I greet the second and every one thereafter with eyebrows raised higher and higher. There is at first only a ripple of laughter, but people start nudging each other and pointing, and Myrtle is puzzled why every pyrotechnic display leads to a gust of laughter.

The next day several people mention my prologue, and Charlie DuBois tells me he will print it in our daily scribble sheet, The Crumb, but it never gets printed. Harry Owen was pretty put out by my parody of his yearly lecture on Florentine Art. He must've got wind of Charlie's intention to print it and put a stop to it. -8-

Skip finds it hard to wake up even though we have an alarm clock. Then he has to build a fire in the fireplace. The result is he is always late getting started for the Inn, and I wait around for him, and we both are late for breakfast. At first we have just time to set up our tables before the students come, so we go hungry to class. Then, in a few days, when we get there, somebody has done our setting up for us. We don't inquire who. Along toward the end of the summer, the news gets back to Howie Mumford this year's headwaiter, and one morning when we arrive late, and find, as usual, our tables set up, and

hurry to the kitchen to grab a bite, Cookie says, "Howie is looking for you!"

We grab our plates and sneak through a door to the basement and stand in the dark on the landing, gobbling our food, when Howie opens the door, and laces into us.

"You be late just one more time, and I'll report you to Harry!"

Somehow it strikes me as ridiculous that such a disciplinarian in South Crossley, should be bawled out by Howard Mumford, and I burst out laughing.

He blows his top, "That does it! You'll hear from Harry about this!"

We never do, but I make an effort to get Skip out of bed a half hour earlier. We learn that it's Amy and a friend of hers who have been setting up our tables.

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I have a terrible crush on Skip. I'm really in love with him. I know he doesn't love me the way I do him. For the life of me I wouldn't let him catch on. I just want to be with him for ever, but know it's impossible. He still has two more years at Tufts. He wants me to come visit during the year. And of course I promise to.

Skip knows I got all A's last summer. In fact most of the waiters know about my high grades and for the first time in my life I'm a big shot in this Little League, very different from when I was an undergraduate. It's partly that here at Bread Loaf the hoi polloi make up most of the young crowd. The more sedate, middle aged school teachers earn enough to pay for their meals, but the real "In" group is the waiters and waitresses so, without doing anything special, I am a leader.

-10-

Professor Eaton announces he expects a two page term paper from everybody. "Not more than two!" It's a huge class. "Don't try to impress me by turning in a dozen pages! I can

learn all I need to in two pages! If you submit more, you can expect a demerit! Select one play from outside reading and write a critique. No more than two pages!"

After he springs that on us, there's a universal grumble in which I don't join. I love to write papers.

I set to work immediately. I decide to get some credit from doing all that required reading he has never made use of. I have noticed how so many of the modern playwrights use the theater as a pulpit for preaching social views. This seems different from the more literary and impersonal voice expressed by Restoration and Eighteenth Century playwrights.

I set to work immediately. I decide to write on Clifford Odets' Waiting for Lefty, the play Gene Link produced in his social studies class. Although I can't find a copy in the Bread Loaf library, I remember it well. I didn't bring with me the copy Gene gave me, but I don't need it.

My title is "The Self Conscious Theatre." I begin with a comment on the eighteenth century comedy of manners and contrast it to Sidney Kingsley's Dead End. Mainly, I go into a detailed summary/comment of the Odets play. In two pages, if you are specific, you don't need a long play to fill up two pages. While other students are moaning "What can I write about?" I have gone ahead and written my paper and fully enjoyed it. I show it to Skip, who ridicules a sentence I put in as a poetic clincher, "The self-conscious playwright reveals social bias, not attempting to conceal his prejudice, but revealing it wrenched out of shape as obvious as a housewife's spontaneous twist to an apple paring coming away from her knife."

Skip read aloud the sentence sarcastically. "Lyle, you must be crazy! '...as obvious as a housewife's spontaneous twist to an apple paring coming away from her knife!' What does that have to do with your subject?"

I think he's peeved at me, perhaps because he enjoys our roughhousing as much as I do. I leave it the way it is and pass

in my paper a week and a half early. Two days later, Dr. Eaton holds up the paper as an example, saying, "I have this early paper, very fine, of course, but it has one typo. The student has written on a play of Clifford Odets, and in one place spells the playwright's name O apostrophe d e t s. Proofread your paper!"

Everybody except me looked puzzled as if not quite grasping the criticism, but I was trying desperately not to squirm in my seat.

-11-

A couple days later, after dinner I was approached by the little back country Calvinist preacher who had caught my interest with his vocabulary and New England twang every year when Prexy invited him to preach at Sunday chapel.

He introduced himself and led me to a pair of widearmed wooden chairs drawn up companionably on the north croquet lawn.

He said, "I'm looking for an English Literature Professor for my faculty at Vermont College in Montpelier, and I understand from Professor Owen that you are an outstanding English major of the class of 1933. I've learned that you are also a candidate for a Master's degree at the end of this summer." I was curious to know his relation to Vermont College, but he didn't explain it. I told him how much I had enjoyed his yearly sermon. He continued to talk about his College. I was really interested. I wanted to get away from being a housemaster. I wanted to teach literature. This looked to be my chance. He left me on a note of encouragement, "I'll be talking with President Moody, and hope you will consider my offer."

I thanked him, hardly believing my luck.

Two nights later, Prexy came for dinner and took me aside: "Lyle, Dr. Parkman tells me he has invited you to teach at Vermont College. I hope you won't go there. You can do better. His college is financially strapped and in danger of closing."

The very next night, Prexy was back: "I've been having some conversations with President Gray of Bates College in Lewiston Maine. He's looking for a teacher of freshman English and American literature. I told him what a whiz you are and he wants you to come see him at his summer cottage down on the coast from Lewiston at Old Orchard Beach south of Portland just above Saco.

"This is altogether different from Vermont College. Bates is one of the established New England colleges. I have recommended you to my old friend Daggett Gray, and I'm sure if he takes a look at you, he will accept you. He would like you to come for an interview at his cottage at two o'clock one afternoon next week. If you can stop in at my office, Pam will give you specific information. He mentioned a beginning salary of \$1200."

I can hardly believe it. Next week is our last week of classes. As a matter of fact, my examinations are scheduled for the end of the week. By cutting classes, I can go for an interview early in the week. It will mean I will take my exams cold without time I planned for review but I don't hesitate.

I have only \$5 and some loose change. I go to Harry Owen and ask if I can borrow his car, sure I can't but I make a stab at it. He won't let me have it. At lunch Penny Stanton, a Hoi Polloi and apprentice teacher at Smith College, offers to lend me her jalopy. I grab the offer.

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The car is a wreck, but I don't mind. All the way across north central Vermont and New Hampshire, I don't know whether to be jubilant or worried I won't get the job. When I get to the settlement of row on row of cottages between Route 1 and the ocean, I follow Pam's directions and have no trouble finding the cottage on the very edge where a strip of sand separates houses from beach. I don't give myself any time to get nervous but

march up and knock. Through the screen door I can see a burly giant ease himself out of a chair and lounge toward me.

"Harrumph! Come in, young man, come in." His voice is a rumble. He is looking me over. In loose slacks and a white shirt open at the throat, he is not at all Presidential. He motions me to an easy chair opposite his own. Through the east window is an expanse of the sea. He clears his throat.

"Harrumph!. Dr. Wright is taking our Rhodes Scholar on a visit to the nation's capital, and asked me to take a look at you. Did you have a pleasant trip?"

"Yes, Sir, I am lucky to have a fine day."

He clears his throat again with another initiatory rumble, and settles into his chair.

"Harrumph! Young man, do you love to teach?"

I can hardly believe it.

"Oh, yes, Sir, I do love to teach. I have always dreamed of someday teaching freshman English in a New England college. It's the dream of my life. I think it's important to teach both the student and the subject."

He shakes his massive head approvingly, "Well, that's very important."

"Harrumph! Young man, what church do you belong to?"

I take the question in stride.

"Mount Hermon is interdenominational. In Northfield there are two Congregational churches, unitarian and trinitarian. I belonged to the trinitarian. In fact, for a while I was superintendent of Sunday School there."

"Harrumph! At Bates most of us go to the Baptist Church, the official college church. There is also the Unitarian and I'm sure you will be welcome at either. I believe that Professor Bushman of our German department is a Deacon in the Unitarian Church. We hope, of course, you will come to us, but the choice is yours to make."

I actually have the job! The interview is over. I sense he doesn't know what more to do with me. Where is Mrs. Gray? He could invite me to tea, but doesn't.

"Harrumph! If you have time, it's still early enough for you to drive to Lewiston to look at the campus. Mr. Berkleman, unfortunately, is away, but Mr. Whitbeck, the other teacher of American Literature, is home, I believe. You may want to drop in for a chat with him."

He is standing and bowing me out. I go back to the car and take the coast road through Portland to Auburn and Lewiston thirty-five miles north. By asking directions I park the car on a sidestreet across from the chapel and walk to the Whitbecks'. My ring of the bell brings a flustered and frowsy housewife who is carrying and shaking a baby's bottle and testing the milk on her wrist. She looks at me absentmindedly as if I'm the grocer boy, then suddenly comes to in response to my question whether this is the home of Professor Whitbeck, and tells me her husband has gone to the store and is expected back in a half hour.

I tell her I'm the new teacher of English, which seems to unnerve her.

"Please come in."

I have the pressnce of mind to say I'm going for a sandwich. I walk past the chapel and dormitories under the great trees and think what a glorious campus. I don't find a student union, so I drive downtown for a hamburger. An hour later, when I return, the livingroom is tidy and Paul Whitbeck, a thin, middleaged, scholarly man answers my ring. He wears a tweed jacket with a leather patch on each elbow.

For a half hour we pour over the tremendous J. B. Hubble Literature and Life, a new text. I am told Professor Whitbeck has spent all summer preparing it.

I ask if we are supposed to teach everything in it, and he tells me, "Yes. It's a mew approach. It puts major writers into historical context."

I think I will have my work cut out for me. Mr. Whitbeck is very nice but seems cautious as if not sure what kind of scholar I am, as if I might be a threat. Before I leave I ask for advice on a rooming house.

"Let me call Angelo Bertocci. He can help you. He's our French teacher, one of the Bertocci brothers from Boston's Little Italy. His brother Peter teaches Philosophy. Angelo is father confessor to a half dozen students who room with a French Canadian housemother down on College Street. Just a minute..."

He is gone for a time. I hardly want to be a father confessor. I had my fill with a hundred students at Mount Hermon. I can hear him buzzing from his study. When he comes back, I'm committed:

"Angelo says come down. He wants you to have supper with him. He can put you up overnight. He likes the thought of another bachelor teacher coming to live there."

"Oh, thank you and thanks for all the time you spent showing me the textbook."

After my earlier walk through campus I came back past the Chapel to my car parked on Mountain Avenue, where I noticed a sign, "Room for Rent." It's a pleasant, unassuming two story and a half house hardly a block from college. I pass it again, turn back, ring the bell, and meet Mrs. Ireland. I like the roomy second floor bedroom. Her grandson, a student, has the small bedroom over the front door, and a high school teacher, who has roomed here for years, has the attic. I like Mrs. Ireland, a real New England grandmother, and I take her room beginning the first of September.

Angelo is a perfect confessor. I like him very much but am happy to confess I am already engaged at Mrs. Ireland's. The rooming house is spit and polished but I can see it will not be as quiet as Mrs. Ireland's.

This will be the first time in four years I will be by myself, with Larry still at Mount Hermon for his senior year.

He has his eye on Middlebury. Now that I'm leaving Mount Hermon, I'll have to pay his tuition. The first thing, when I get back to Bread Loaf, I must send Dr. Porter a telegram.

Retracing my route through western Maine, New Hampshire and north central Vermont, I am in the upper strata of Empyrean. I'm whistling, chortling, shouting, shutting up when a car approaches. Just east of the Vermont border, I have a left rear flat tire. Whistling, I change it for the nearly worn-out spare. In Middlebury, I stop at a garage, arrange to have the flat repaired, and ride to campus in the mail truck.

I have a problem. I spent every penny on the trip. I don't have a cent. When I return the keys to Penny, she hugs me for my good news, and I tell her her car is down in Middlebury having a flat fixed. Without offering to fill the car with gas or pay for the flat, I run on to tell others I got the job. I'm embarrassed as hell about not paying, but where could I scrounge the money?

-14-

The very next morning I have the exam in American Drama. I've hardly looked over my notes and I carry the memory of Professor Eaton's rebuke for my foolish typo. I'm not sure it was really a typo, for I actually thought I should spell Odets with an apostrophe, or, rather, I had supposed that was the right spelling and hadn't given the matter a thought. I am thinking that maybe my exam will be good enough to give me an A.

Since right after the Drama exam I have to wait on table, I go into the Plato exam without having time to review anything. Questions are specific. I'm supposed to remember beginning arguments and concluding arguments and account for the development of several dialogues. I bluff it.

Those are the hard exams. For Miss Branch's the next morning I hardly need to review. I get the notion to answer the questions in epigrammatic verse.

For example: "Anyone playing immoral music shall be liable to arrest: (Police Regulation, Washington, D. C.). Comment."

This is the fourth and next to last question: (15 minutes):. With one more to go, I'm rushing on with the doggerel with not a moment for thought:

The Law

Immoral music on the street?
What music is immoral?
What gives a lilt to weary feet
And molds grim faces into sweet
And lifts gray smoke to coral?

Stupid defenders of the right!
Is it a sin for feet to dance,
Is it a crime when eyes grow bright
And sober faces spring alight
From music's gay romance?

Hardly time to reread, on to the last question. I suppose it's a kind of trauma from the whole pile up of emotion over getting the job and lack of my customary boning for exams. I dash off the last question and turn in the paper. I spend the afternoon napping, then after supper, can't stop myself from running to Niss Branch's door in Cherry Cottage and knocking:

"Have you read my exam?"

She is glowing. "I just finished it. It's the most inspired paper I've ever had turned in."

"Could I have it to copy?"

"Yes. But I have to have it back in an hour. I haven't graded it and have to have it for my file."

I carry it to Maple attic and type it and carry it back. She says, "Just a minute, I'll be back in a minute."

I can see her scribbling at her desk.

When she comes back, she has written on the cover:

What wonder that his eyes shone bright,
His sun-bright looks were curly!
But strange he came before the night
Cast down its shadows surly;

In peerless poesie he had writ
The truths he had to say.
You really have to hand him it:
The masterpiece rates A.

Miss Branch

I ask for a copy of the exam to put with my typescript, and when I get back to Maple attic, remember her poem well enough to write it on the cover of my copy.

Skip is out with Dorothy Joyce. I have the luck to run into Amy in front of the Inn, and we walk out by her dorm. Past the barn we take the path Skip and I always followed toward Gilmore.

She exults over my good news. "You are getting a raise and a chance to teach in college!"

She makes me feel pretty proud of myself. This will be our last time together. She isn't staying for the Writer's Conference. "Can you come to visit me in Bennington after the conference? My folks are coming to get me tomorrow afternoon. I want you to meet them."

On the way back on the little bridge crossing the trickle of brook running down from the mountain, we stop to look at moonlight sparkling on water. I kiss her. A long kiss. We are holding hands walking back to her dorm.

I have to wait up a long time to show the exam to Skip. He is impressed. "Another A! I should say everything's going your way!"

But his mind is full of Dorothy. He hardly looked at the exam, only the cover poem from Miss Branch.

Next morning I carry the folded sheets in my pocket, and at breakfast show it to one of the girls who was in Miss Branch's class. She passes it around the table, and everybody exclaims.

At lunch I am still carrying it. I don't show it to anybody. Mrs. Eaton is having lunch alone at another table. She motions me to come. I hardly know her.

"I've heard about your remarkable examination. Do you have it?"

"Yes."

I show it to her. She fusses with her eyeglasses, props them on, and studies Miss Branch's poem on the cover, then starts reading my answers. "This is really extraordinary. May I borrow it for an hour?"

I don't know how to refuse. She meets me in the Blue Parlor in an hour to give back the paper.

Later in the afternoon, I have an urgent summons from Harry Owen. In his office, he congratulates me on my getting the job at Bates College.

"I'm sure you realize how unusual it is to make the transition from secondary school to college teaching without a degree from a major graduate school. It puts Bread Loaf up to be measured and judged against universities like Yale where Bates might have looked for a candidate.

"Lyle, I'm trying to improve our staff. As one of our high ranking students, you can help. I've been hearing complaints about Miss Branch -- that her course is not up to the standard graduate level. You took it last year and got permission to take it over this year. I'd like your candid opinion."

My mind is racing. All along I didn't like the look on Mrs. Eaton's face. She was "judgmental." It seemed to be the Great Lady exercising her right of eminent domain. I played right into her hand.

I said, "Harry. Miss Branch is a very unusual teacher. Her students love her. She is very personal. In a very relaxed way she gets students to think about literature in relation to the other arts. It's like what you do with your freshmen, only she's doing it with lots older people, many of them high school teachers who are in a rut and never get beyond rules of punctuation and transitions between paragraphs and reading books like Silas Marner and Macaulay's "Essay on Addison."

"I've heard it said her book is not scholarly."

"It grew out of her teaching here at Bread Loaf."

"I'm thinking of hiring somebody from one of the great universities, some one well versed in art theory. And perhaps also getting a well known poet -- to teach a seminar together. It could attract promising young graduate students, something beyond the reach of old maid public school teachers."

"Well, I believe it's not the old teachers but the young teachers who like Miss Branch best. A lot of them become very fond of her,"

"She creates a problem. She has to have her companion Miss Smith, and takes up most of the ground floor of Cherry, and we don't have a lot of room to spare."

I leave the conference feeling bad for Miss Branch and my part in adding fuel to the fire.

-14-

The next day Amy is leaving for Bennington. Her father and mother come to get her. A farm couple, her mother is an overweight matriarch with sloping waistline, her father a horny handed Vermont small farmer. Mrs. Niles is boss. She invites me to visit them, and I agree for the very first day after Writers' Conference.

Late that afternoon, I get my grades.

B-minus for my paper on Odets, upped to a B in

Professor Eaton's course in the Drama.

B in Davidson's Plato.

And what I can't fathom -- B in Miss Branch's course.

That evening when we get our diplomas, I get a prolonged ovation from the student body, some of whom know I'm going to Bates College, but there's no way anybody, not even Skip Henryson can know how for the first time I haven't got a single A. I wonder if Miss Branch has already got her marching orders. After that grade on the exam, how could she have given me a B?

BOOK II.13WICKED...and Spotless as the Lamb
Conference, 1937 Chapter Thirteen

-1-

For the Writers' Conference Shep Henryson and I are back rooming in Maple Attic. Gilmore Cottage is closed. We both are waiting on staff again. Many are old friends -- the Merilees sisters are both back, Bernard deVoto, Patrick Colum, Donald Davidson, Ted Morrison, of course, and Kay and the usual host of celebrities showing up for a day or a meal.

After supper I don't see much of Shep because he's off to see Dottie Joyce. He's crazy about her and thinks he will marry her. At the same time he's still getting letters from his girl back in Seattle, and every once in a while goes practically traumatic when radio static drowns out her voice after she's written "...to, please, not miss this broadcast."

Thyra Vickery is still providing afternoon tea and snacks in the cottage where, during summer school, Ted Morrison held his creative writing class. She and I spend evenings together. She likes me but I don't particularly like her acid tongue. She is after me to visit her and her mother down on the Massachusetts coast in Marshfield Hills between conference and my first classes at Bates. But I have the date with Amy, and I need to go back to Hermon to pick up some things, and visit Larry and assure him he hasn't lost my support, and visit Clayt and Abby in Northfield.

Toward the end of the second and last week, I begin to listen to the flack between Bill Sweetworth and Tom Allen over our chambermaid Sally Hodley. Tom says she is a nymphomaniac crazy about cocks. He claims to have spent a night with her, sneaking in through her window at Treman, where Dr. and Mrs. Hodley and Sally room.

One morning Bill shows us a juicy wetdream he left in his bed, covering it with the sheet for Sally to put her hand in when she comes to make his bed. That night he swears, he was peeking out of the john and saw her jump back, then dip her finger into the mess and lick it off dreamily.

We all agree Sally is a miracle, absolutely irresistible, plump and ripe, and the best of it, no slouch for brains either. She's very bright. Thursday I'm alone in the room, hanging around after breakfast for her to come in. At first she pays no attention to me because I've never played up to her. But this morning, I'm leaning out the west window looking down on the road, when Shep runs from the Inn and yells up asking me to throw down his wallet he left under his pillow. I find it and toss it down, and we're yelling back and forth, when Sally comes over and pushes in beside me and looks down and calls,

"Hi, Shep, Dottie told me if I see you to tell you she'll be ten minutes late tonight. But you be sure to wait."

We're there pushed together, looking down at Shep who missed the wallet when I threw it, and is picking it out of the grass.

I say to Sally, "There's a full moon tonight. Have you ever been to Silent Cliff by moonlight and looked down over the campus? It's fabulous. You know how the path winds back on itself. You can see over the floodplain to the Lake shining in moonlight and the Adirondacks beyond."

I hardly believe I'm saying it. My knee is pressed against her breast where she's crouched to look down, and I can feel an erection rising in my groin. It's unlike me, but I like it. I say, "I can bring a couple of blankets."

She says, "Sounds lovely, but I couldn't start till nine."

"Nine is perfect. Moonlight doesn't break till around ten, just enough time."

She really is lovely and intelligent, too. All the way along the dark highway climbing to where the road dips toward

Hancock, we are holding hands and leaning into each other. From a change in the air and sudden lightness to the east I can tell when we reach the divide at the top. In pitch dark, I turn a right angle north up the high bank and reach back for her hand and pull her beside me. I go ahead, measuring the trail by the bottoms of my feet, realizing I should have brought a flashlight, but no use worrying about that now. It's mostly up with a few marshy declines, but mostly up, sometimes for a long spell, and sometimes a rocky incline where there's danger of twisting an ankle. We lose track of turnings, but after a long time suddenly I feel grass under foot and sit abruptly and pull her beside me. It could have been scary but I don't let it be. I know we are on the edge of the steep patch of sward that pitches down to the brink of the cliff. If we had kept on two rods we could have gone over. This is the place where the trail north veers back away from the view. Partly because I don't want to think of it, I don't tell her what a close call we had. We spread our blankets and lie close waiting for moonrise. The sky brightens behind the dense cover of trees to our east and swiftly opens to the west. A long way off we can see tops of the Adirondacks, then the valley opens below us, then the edge of the moon sails swiftly above treetops. In no time the shining flat plate is riding above us not so much a ball as two dimensional, a symmetrical, luminous shield.

We lie there a long time saying nothing, absorbed in the view and each other. My right arm is under her shoulders. When I turn toward her, we are absorbed in our mouths, hardly aware of what our hands are doing, but I know when she is ready and she when I am. I explore her softness. I don't penetrate. It's as if she doesn't want me to, yet she seems partly open, and the cope of my cock rotates gently in the pouched cleft juiced by my precum. After a long time she gives a startling, longdrawn deep sigh and relaxes. I rest where I am, contented.

We are quiet a long time. Then she stirs: "Sometimes I close tight. It just happens. Can I do something for you?"

I don't say anything, simply lie there, not craving more than I have. In time I have lost my erection and twist away from her, yet we still lie together. From her breathing I think she is sleeping. I let myself breathe in her rhythm and we sleep under the soft moonlight.

When I wake, it is strange. I am satisfied. The moon has sailed past and is over Lake Champlain, a sheet of gold on the dull plain.

It's early morning and the moon has now gone down behind the distant peaks in New York State. We pull our clothes together. I roll the blankets and carry them over my shoulder. It's light enough to follow the trail. On the road, we are silent almost to the bottom of the mountain, where the forest dies and farmland appears a mile east of campus.

I say, "Why can't we always..."

I hardly know what I want to say, but I feel tight chested and elated.

We part without a word when she turns toward Treman and I toward Maple. The attic is in shadow. Shep Henryson is asleep. It's early enough to catch another hour's sleep before breakfast..

-2-

On the last night for the staff there was no lecture, only a short valediction. Mrs. DeVoto has been here for a couple nights and gone. The Merilees sisters grabbed a bite and disappeared. The Columns have already gone on the afternoon bus to the depot in Bennington.

There has been a collection taken for Shep Henryson and me and we each have nearly thirty dollars in our pocket.

Bennie DeVoto comes in with Dr. Hodley and gobbles his dinner. When I bring him dessert, he looks up at me and asks, "Where are you bound for tomorrow?"

I'm flattered with his attention. "I'm going to Bennington to see my girl."

"If you can get your dudds together in a hurry, why don't you ride down with me tonight? You can stay with us at Bennington College."

First I have to run see Thyra and tell her I have this ride to Bennington so she needn't go out of her way as she planned to but can drive directly to Brattleboro on the east side of the state. She immediately alters her plans and offers to meet me in two days, around eleven in the morning on Route 9 to Brattleboro on the outskirts of Bennington. She has the crazy notion I can drive to Marshfield Hills for overnight with her mother and hitch from there to Northfield, where I have arranged to stay with Clayt and Abbie and get my things from storage in the closet of my digs on the second floor of Crossley Hall at Mount Hermon.

There's no time to argue or do anything else than agree with her.

I have to borrow Shep's key to Gilmore to get a duffelbag stuffed with dirty clothes from all summer. On the way back, after having just crossed the bridge over the small stream behind the Inn Barn, I meet Sally Hodley on the path. I put down the duffel, open my arms, and we are in a deep embrace, mouths open, passion rising.

Staggering, I'm about to fall into deep grass pulling her with me, when I hear faraway over on the road between the Inn and Maple, Shep's voice calling "Ly..le," a strangled note of abandon in it as if he thinks I have gone and left him.

I struggle to pull myself together, break away from Sally, saying "I've got to go. Bennie is waiting for me. I've got to go to Maple Attic." I am blown up and filled with a great joy.

I leave her standing there, pick up my duffel and run past the dark barn crosslots to Maple, finding Shep brooding like a forlorn sheep on the front steps . We run upstairs and together

carry my typewriter, overstuffed briefcase and my Gilmore duffel and another duffel to the Inn. Bennie is sitting in the car, engine idling. Catching sight of our load, he gets out, unlocks the trunk, and Shep and I stow my goods. Then I'm in the passenger seat, my hand and arm out the window, holding onto Shep, who is running along the edge of the road clasping my hand till the increasing speed of the car breaks our grip, leaving him behind.

On the drive, Bennie talks to me as if I'm his son or his nephew. "Mrs. DeVoto and I and the children are living in a faculty house on campus. We'll put you in the spare room, and after breakfast, I'll drive you over to Amy's."

It's after ten when we get to the white clapboard house west of the Library. I'm ready to drop, and am shown immediately to my room, where I undress, take a shower, and use the bedside phone to call Amy and surprise her with where I am calling from. Hanging up, I pull my crammed looseleaf notebook out of the briefcase and, unable to sleep, lie awake two or three hours jotting down mixed up emotions of high elation in the cramped hand I use for such writing. The book is full of recollections: on-the-spot vignettes over the past two or three years, fragments of poems, quotations, but mostly confessions, some of them hedged for the judgment of a mythical, presumed, critically-sympathetic reader.

-3-

After breakfast we follow Amy's directions to the center of Bennington, then toward Brattleboro and right on Beech Street, as Amy said over the phone. At a fork in the road, we go straight ahead and find ourselves climbing toward the shoulder of the mountain and have to turn back to the fork at the Firehouse, where we twist back and take the other branch soon joining with South Stream Road, coming out from town. I'm following Amy's promptings: past the fish hatchery and a road turning left to the mountain, past a square modern house on the

left and above on the knoll a white farmhouse with red barn hugging the road on the right and on up till the grade peters out and starts gently down, past two white houses on the right. Just beyond the second, we turn right angle and pass a one-room school. Coming over a slight crest onto a downgrade we can see far ahead below the shoulder of the opposite hill, a sprawling farmhouse laid out spreading back from the road on a downslope, with a redpainted basement first storey catching the eye and two and a half storeys above it. There's a great square chimney over the ridgepole of the main house following the line of the road, and back on an ell with its ridgepole at right angle to the house, a small kitchen chimney like the chimney of our house in Northfield Farms, as if the ell were an afterthought. Beyond the ell, a cluster of outbuildings swing downgrade to the great horseshoe-shaped barn with its silo at its northeast corner. It's like a colored postcard photograph of a prosperous Vermont farm, spruce, impeccably cared for. I can see Benny is impressed, but I hardly notice more than an instant camera eyeflick, my mind is so focussed on what it's going to be like to meet Amy at home here. How will her folks treat me, especially her dominating mother? If Mrs. Niles accepts me, I'm convinced her nondescript husband will.

We swung into the dooryard, and hardly came to a stop when Amy came from the side porch tucked on the north side under the eaves where the main house connects with the ell. Cool and neat, with her short hair like a boy's and her lopsided face, square on one side, oval on the other, I could sense her awkwardness. We shook hands and I introduced her to Benny, who helped me unload from the trunk. We stood there hardly talking, till Benny got into the car, and with a slight wave of the hand, backed from the dooryard and swung downhill the way we came. Surrounded with my gear, we watched him disappear, then we turned to go inside.

Olive is there, whom I met at Dr. Beers' at graduation. She is teaching English in the high school. Mrs. Niles is studying me and comes forward, a bit stiff but I lay it to her being a farm wife dealing with a college classmate of her daughter. I'm shown to my cot in the sewing room back behind the diningroom, its east window looking down on the driveway. Mr. Niles is not visible. I gather he's in the barn or out in the field. The greeting is formal. Except for a slight tremor in Amy's voice and a heartiness in Olive's there's no warmth. I had been feeling a twinge of guilt for not suggesting that Benny might be interested in being shown around the farm, which is much grander than I expected. Coming from the hearty comradeship of Bread Loaf, I feel superior to these dirt farmers. Anyway, I'm here to see Amy and am staying over only one night, then I'm supposed to meet Thyra on the road to Brattleboro

At lunch there was plenty of food -- liver and bacon, pickled onions, gherkins and beets, fried potatoes, bread and butter and strawberry jam, and for dessert jello and real whipped cream, thick as vanilla ice cream, everything home grown, though nobody had to tell me. At home this would have been company fare, more plentiful than we ever afforded. Beyond the plenty, what I noticed chiefly was Mr. Niles's preoccupation with his plate and the way he gripped the salt cellar, raising it like a gavel, coating meat and potatoes like a sprinkle of snow. The one softening note was a sleek yellow/red tomcat on the side table, who kept nipping Mr. Niles' elbow with his claw, and carrying to his jaws a morsel of liver or bacon, ignoring the human gathering with a superiority that suggested he took for granted an affection belying the coldness of the family toward each other. Somebody at least, and perhaps everybody, loved cats, or at least loved Old Dan. His name itself -- like my grandfather's -- spelled for me a loving indulgence. As always with strangers, I'm eager to make a good impression.

After lunch, Mrs. Niles disappeared through an opening between wall cupboards and great iron cookstove and shut the door. Mr. Niles heavily trudged between pantry and back kitchen from where a slammed door suggested he had gone to barn or cornfield. Olive washed, Amy wiped dishes silently, economically, with an almost competitive speed. I was not allowed to take up dishrag or dishtowel.

Like the old house out to Gramp's, the real livingroom seemed to be the kitchen. Dominating the ell, it was the first room you entered, with its great Sears/Roebuck woodstove, wall cupboards, and oval table for family and, I gathered from their talk, with leaves added to accommodate farmhands in hoeing and haying and threshing season. There would be democracy in that the hands would sit at table, and, in winter, from their conversation, a schoolteacher (to be taken back into the family when she returned in the Fall). There was, then, a family circle, to which you would be welcome with sufficient reason, but the status had to be manifest. Anyone wishing to enter that circle would have a row to hoe.

The house proved mammoth. In the dark diningroom we had passed through to reach my bedroom, two windows looked out on the overhang of the porch; the opposite wall was devoted to a walled-in and papered-over fireplace, with evidence of Dutch oven. The furniture was New England antique, passed on from generation to generation. Off this was my sleeping chamber, narrow and small. A door led into the sitting room, also with east windows and with south windows looking out on the road. It had a smaller fireplace, with, in front of it a castiron stove, and in front of that a fancy iron grate in the floor above a cellar furnace. In the ceiling above the stove, a round grate small as a dinner plate allowed heat to escape upstairs to a probable bedroom. But I was not privy to the upstairs, where Olive slept, and where Amy, I gathered, had her own room on the west side above her father's and mother's. Also downstairs, on

the west side, there were two connected rooms used as a parlor, chiefly for company.

There was an awkwardness between us that Olive intermittently tried to dispel with light chatter about what I had done at Bread Loaf and what she was doing in her teaching. Amy and I in the afternoon took a walk of nearly four miles, as she told me, "around the square." The first leg conducted us a quarter mile east on the crossroad Bennie and I had traveled from South Stream. There we turned due south an eighth of a mile, then southwest onto a two-mile diagonal sideroad called Maple Grove. Peeling off from South Stream, this took us by a stretch of scattered dwellings, past another one-room school, and through a stand of woods to a crossroad.

There we turned north through a dense grove of ancient maples on both sides of the road, then passed a farmhouse with a disheveled yard and horsesheds and a great milking shed with silos. This was the Strohmaier Place, the farmstead of a German immigrant who with his brother in the mid-twenties had come penniless from Germany with concentrated determination to make good in America. At first somewhat under the tutelage of Walter Niles, the brothers leased and then borrowed to buy a gone-to-seed farm and were becoming prosperous Vermont farmers.

Over a hill from this farm, we dipped past a white house on the left where Walter grew up as boy and young man before he married Laura Stafford and came to live on what had been the Stafford Place, now the Niles Place. His boyhood home was now the Philpott Place, where Walter's sister Lois lived with her husband. Several years ago the old folks had gone to live downtown where both of them had died.

Our conversation shifted to poetry and Bread Loaf, both of them safe subjects and we warmed to them. I sensed that out here in public it would have been unseemly to hold hands.

From the Philpott Place we climbed another grade to a hilltop that gave a view over and beyond the town of Bennington,

north and northwest, to a sweep of a far horizon -- from mountains in New York State, past in middle ground, dead ahead, the Taconic range on the west and, on the east the Green Mountains, the two ranges stretching parallel north to Manchester and Rutland, with a sparsely populated valley between them. Swinging further east a gap toward Wilmington and Brattleboro showed where the Molly Stark Trail labored, down which tomorrow morning Thyra would come to fetch me. After admiring this view, we descended a hill to the crossroad peeling off to the right, taking us back to the Niles Place.

Supper was as lavishly impersonal as lunch. There was talk of rural school business, and I got a different impression of Mr. Niles when I learned he was chairman of the school board. Mrs. Niles talked to Olive about the next meeting of Eastern Star, where for years she had been Secretary. After the old folks retired to the sitting room, Amy and Olive did dishes with the same economical concentration. Again Olive washed and Amy dried and put away. I sat at the big oblong table watching. Afterward, Amy invited me into the double west parlor, where, in the first room, she cranked the handle of a standup victrola and we listened to red seal recordings of Caruso and Schumann-Heink singing operatic airs. Then we wandered into the front parlor crowded with sofas and overstuffed chairs and an upright piano. Green paper shades were drawn exactly to the center crosspiece. Under dim light from west windows I could make out ancient wallpaper with a piping of white chair rail separating bottom from top panels. Upper panels were embellished with prints of country landscapes, one of a bear crossing gingerly a huge brown log with a hole in the middle of it, till, looking closely, I discovered he was on an arched bridge whose span was reflected in a stream. Between two southern exposure windows looking out on the road, stood an eight-foot tall oak hatrack with pierglass above and a low shelf holding a daffodil-colored glass bowl. Underneath the shelf were small drawers firmly closed, while

above, on each side of the mirror were, one above the other, a pair of metal hooks, reaching imploring, stiff, galvanized fingers. We bent to look across the road at the long light of an evening hayfield, already harvested. Stepping back I draw Amy into my arms. Back-to the mirror, she relaxes. Over her shoulder I can see my left eye and, dimly, my arms embracing her. We are stiffly posed, like a couple midstage under the proscenium arch of a theater. I lose sight of myself as I kiss her. thinking how she seems for the first time to relinquish her guard while I, with inner vision contemplate the artful tableau of our engagement.

-4-

I am somewhat nervous about my getaway. At breakfast when the phone rings in the diningroom, Mrs. Niles gets up heavily and progresses into that room and lifts the phone. We are all listening. Nobody is saying anything. She comes back announcing, "Somebody for Lyle. She told her name but I couldn't get it."

When I came back, I told Amy, "That was Thyra in Townsend. She will pick me up if I can catch a ride to the edge of town toward Brattleboro."

Mrs. Niles said, "She could just as well have come here."

I said, "I didn't have the directions."

After a lengthy pause, Olive offered, "I'll drive you."

We finished our breakfasts. I said goodbye to Mr. Niles before he went to the barn. Mrs. Niles disappeared into her bedroom. Olive said, "I'll take care of the dishes."

Amy and I walked outdoors and to the hilltop with its view. Amy asked if I would write her and I said I would. We walked through an iron gate into a fenced in cemetery with forty to fifty headstones, mostly Bushnell.

Amy said, "It's the Bushnell cemetery and the school is the Bushnell school. Olive taught there a year before she went to teach in the high school."

I found a stone for a twenty-two year old man who died in 1826:

Mr. Herman Bushnell
who died in the 22nd year of his age
February 22nd 1826
Here lies the Man that was
Filled with grace and truth

It was getting late. We had just time to get back down to the farmhouse, where I collected my stuff and waited in the kitchen while Amy fetched her mother to say goodbye. Olive helped me pack everything in the back seat, I said goodbye to Amy and we were off.

I'm afraid we may get all the way up into the mountains, but we've timed it right so we are only coming in to Woodford when I catch sight of the ancient jalopy tipped back toward the rear by a steamer trunk lashed onto the boot of it.

We were opposite a driveway. Olive stopped and tooted her horn, Thyra swung into the yard, and I got out and went over, and came back and had Olive pull in behind her. I introduced Thyra and Olive, transferred my duffels and hand luggage, and got in with Thyra, and Olive backed out and vanished toward Bennington out of view.

Thyra asks, "Was that Amy's sister?"

"Yes."

"How was Amy?"

"All right. She's got a new job out in LeRoy, New York."

"I hope she likes it. I like New England. I called my mother, and she wants you to come visit overnight with us in Marshfield Hills. That's a marsh in the fields and some hills in back of it, if you can imagine. We are right on the coast. My mother is Scandinavian. You will like her."

I don't have to be anywhere any particular time till I go to Bates in a couple of weeks. Plenty of time to clear up things at Mount Hermon and spend a few days with Clayt and

Abbie. Although I don't say a word about it I'm glad to get away from the Nileses. If Thyra curbs her caustic tongue, we can have a good time.

I say, "Ok, for overnight. But I have to be back at Mount Hermon day after tomorrow."

Their house is in a cove on a lonely stretch of beach practically on the water with just a stretch of sand between us and waves combing in. Mrs. Vickery, a tall, rawboned widow, made it seem she was doing everything special for me: "I am making you a chicken stew with dumplings and lots of gravy, and new potatoes and sweetcorn, and some of my peach dumplings with hard sauce, how does that strike you?"

After supper and supper dishes where I'm allowed to use a dish towel, Thyra and I put on bathing suits and on the edge of dark walk along the beach. Night is settling, a coolness coming in after the heat of the day. Looking back at our footprints in the soft sand, I see phosphorescence gathering in the prints.

I say, "Look, we are walking on stars."

"It's phosphorescence."

"Yes, I know."

"You know everything. How do you know so much?"

"I studied it in Geology."

We spread beach towels and lie together on the sand. I don't kiss her. We talk about stars and about poetry and I recite:

"Shy as a star when only one
is shining in the sky..."

And Thyra recites:

"Bright star, would I were steadfast as thou
art," and I say, "That's Keats."

and Thyra says, "You know everything."

But I can't remember the next line, and am glad she doesn't ask me.

When we get back to the cottage, Mrs. Vickery makes coffee, and the three of us sit up late talking all hours.

But the next day I have to hitchhike back to Northfield, where I stay with Clayt and Abby.

That night after supper Clayt said, "Now you are a college teacher, you've got to have a car.

He drove me up to the Chevrolet garage, and we tried out a new coupe, and I signed a contract. That night I couldn't sleep, and the next day I spent all day worrying that with paying Larry's tuition, I couldn't afford it, so I had Clayt carry me back to the dealer, and he was very good about it and tore up the contract.

At Mount Hermon it was strange to go up to my old apartment and find Fred McVeigh there as housemaster. They had made over the rooms, but not the way I wanted, and I was glad I was not going to be there another year.

I went down to the treasurer's office, where I persuaded Mr. Amsden to let me have a waiver for a couple of months on paying Larry's fall tuition. While I was there, Betty Woodruff came out of Dean Jackson's office and congratulated me on my promotion. I tried to persuade her to walk out onto the steps for a talk, but she wouldn't and I tumbled it was because she thought the men in the office would consider it improper.

I made an appointment to see Headmaster Porter the next day, when he congratulated me again on going to Bates. He said, "I like to think of Mount Hermon as a seedbed for teachers to go on to colleges and universities. Have you heard that Bill Burdick has an appointment at Lafayette in the drama department?"

Since in two years at Hermon I had hardly had a word with Bill Burdick but considered him far and away above me in learning and certainly in social graces, I was not as much impressed as I might have been.

As I was leaving Dr. Porter gave me a letter addressed to me from Lewiston. It was from Dr. Edwin Wright, cordially welcoming me to the staff of the Bates English department and confirming that my "load" would be three sections of freshman English and two of Survey of American Literature. My salary, already confirmed by written contract, would be \$1,200. He concluded by inviting me to be his guest until I could find a suitable lodging. I wrote back immediately thanking him, and looking forward to meeting him early in September, and informing him I had already arranged to live with the Irelands.

BOOK II.14WICKED...and Spotless as the Lamb

Bates College, 1937Chapter Fourteen

-1-

Eleanor McCue was already at the Irelands' when I moved in. She had the large room at the top of the attic stairs with a window looking towards the College. Eleanor was a high school English teacher, close to forty, a graduate of Bates. Heavy set, round faced, overflowing with good will, she was my friend in a minute. I was looking for a boarding house, and she recommended Mrs. Vosmus, where she and her friend Nellie Mae Lang took their meals. Nellie Mae roomed with the Vosmuses whom, as soon as I saw the rawboned tall woman and her small, lazy husband, I thought of as The Vosmi. There was also Mrs. Vosmus's mother, an old lady and a daughter. Old Lady Ingersol had fine manners and made it clear her daughter married beneath her. Mrs. Vosmus was a nervous, considerate hostess and fair cook.

I had breakfast and lunch there twice before I met Nellie Mae. They told me next week we would be joined at dinner by Professor Earl McGee, English teacher at the College and former Rhodes Scholar.

On my first Saturday I had my first contact with the English chairman, Dr. Edwin Wright, when he called me at 7:30 to invite me to ride over with him to Gardener, where their last year's valedictorian, a Rhodes Scholar elect, was about to leave for Oxford. On the drive over, he told me he had written his Harvard dissertation "...And Gladly Teach" on the essays of Addison and Steele. Eddie had himself been a special student at Oxford for a few months after World War One. A month ago he had taken Denham Sutcliffe, their new Rhodes Scholar, on a trip to Washington: "I told him he must see his nation's capital before

traveling across the ocean to London. Our trip was the reason you didn't see me before you were appointed."

Mrs. Sutcliffe served us apple pie a la mode, with ice cream from her home freezer. Denham was overpoweringly modest about his achievements: "I tell you one thing. I'm not going to come back with a British accent. The good old Maine dialect I grew up with is good enough for me."

On our ride back to the College, Dr. Wright informed me that he had arranged for me to meet the faculty and their wives the first of next week: "I'm having a new house built just around the corner from where you live, but it won't be ready for at least a month, so you will have to put up with us at my apartment just off campus."

-2-

I dressed carefully for the faculty dinner, wishing I looked older and more scholarly. They were catching up with each other after summer vacation.

Berkleman had spent the summer at Columbia. "They know everything. I had a course with Mark Van Doran. He may not be a great poet, but he is a great critic. I felt as if I know nothing."

Paul Whitbeck spent all summer at home preparing lectures from the new anthology for American Literature: "I had my hands full. That's a tremendous anthology. A whole new look at American literature. Authors I never heard of. I bet you never heard of "The Sotweed Factor" by Ebenezer Cooke."

Eddie Wright said, "I never even heard of 'sotweed.' And what on earth is a 'factor'?"

"'Sotweed' is tobacco. And you should know 'Factor' from Hardy's 'corn factor' in Far from the Madding Crowd. A 'factor' is a merchant, and 'sotweed factor' is a merchant who came to the Chesapeake Bay area to make his fortune growing tobacco and

selling it on the London market. The Sotweed Factor is a mock epic published in London in the early Eighteenth Century."

"And is it American Literature?"

"I guess it's going to be. It's in our book."

"And what are you up to, Earl?"

When he got back to Lewiston, Earl found a letter from the president of Auburn/Lewiston Rotary inviting him to lecture.

"I'm going to talk on British Light Wits."

Are they a school?"

"They are just poets who don't take themselves too seriously:

"Frances Coppard -- that's Frances with an e:

'O why do you walk through the fields in gloves...

...Fat white woman whom nobody loves?'

"Gelett Burgess:

'I never saw a purple cow...'

"...and a marvelous poem about a Mexican volcano with a refrain

'Popocatepetl Bang! Bang!'"

ddie turned to me: "We have another one who spent his summer in school. Lyle, what can you tell us about Bread Loaf?"

Everybody looked at me. I cleared my throat.

"I spent three summers there. For two summers I had creative writing with Theodore Morrison, head of freshman English at Harvard, and last summer and this I was in Leonora Branch's course on "The Training of Literary Judgment." We read about and looked at works of art, and read criticism by critics like Arnold and Pater and Samuel Johnson and Anatole France, and learned about different kinds of criticism."

"What did you write your thesis on?"

"Bread Loaf doesn't require a thesis. You just take so many courses for so many credits. It usually takes five summers."

Bob Berkleman had just had a paper accepted.

"Where?"

"College English?"

"What's it about?"

"Moby-Dick, Curiosity or Classic?"

"And which is it?"

"You have to wait and read it."

After dinner and a lot more talk, Eddie Wright held me back till the others left and then drove me home, around a block so I could see the new house going up around the corner from Mountain Avenue. When we got there, he stopped for me to have a look at the span new story and a half house, with its long breezeway and attached garage.

"You notice it has a main house and between the house and garage that connecting apartment is for my houseboy. I will have one of the seniors as a protegee to help earn his tuition."

He turned off the engine, "Would you like to take a look?"

He led me in through the front door, turned on the light switch and through the foyer into a spacious living room nearly twice the size of the narrow one in his apartment. In the kitchen, appliances were moved in but only partly installed. The master bedroom had windows front and back with a view over a lot, where he had already planted a garden.

"I'm harvesting my first crop. Lettuce and onions and carrots we had for dinner came from here."

Walking along the breezeway, we looked into the student bedroom/bath, and utility kitchen. "Isn't this attractive?" There was already a threequarter bed and a bureau and an easy chair, with a long table under the window, a reading lamp and a straight chair drawn up as if for the student.

I was almost envious, wishing I could have been lucky enough at Middlebury to have had such a windfall.

Dr. Wright sat on the bed and bounced it: "I picked out the mattress myself. Try it."

I grinned and instead of joining him, took a look out the front window, from where, craning my neck, I could see the rear of the Ireland house. As a matter of fact, I was happy not to be living under the scrutiny of my chairman. I could hardly wait for the luxury of teaching without all those students and floor officers under my supervision.

-3-

The first Monday of classes, I have an 8 o'clock Survey of American Literature. It will be my first college class and I am trying not to get worked up. I have spent most of the weekend preparing -- but I have nothing written except a few sketchy notes, and how will it come out when I talk it, especially if students asked questions, as I hope they will?

I have got to the sidewalk, when the door nextdoor opens and an elderly stranger carrying a brown leather bookbag hurries down the walk. Professor Krantz, the Latin teacher, introduces himself, then gives me a straight look, and adds, "It's the same every year. I still get my wind up on my way to my first class."

I am far too early. There are only a couple students sitting in the front row. I sit with them, and listen to their talk about what they did during summer vacation, and I realize they think I'm a student. When the bell rings, the room has filled up with almost thirty students, and I have to get up and go to the desk and open my briefcase and take out papers. There's a

gasp from the girl in the front row I sat beside when I came in. I have to open my mouth and start the lesson, so I begin with a roll call. Everybody present, including a man in the back row who looks to be thirty-five. I've prepared a mimeographed list

of current novels and books of poems for outside reading. I explain that these are optional, not required, but they can feel free to substitute a criticism of one of these books for the topic suggested for one of the required papers. There are a lot of questions about the new textbook, and these take more time than I had expected.

-4-

The first bell for next class rings, and several sophomores stop me to ask questions, so I have to break away to get downstairs. The room is full of freshmen all watching me.

After I take attendance, I pull out of my briefcase a small wood carving one of my Mount Hermon students gave me of those three monkeys, one with hand over his mouth, one with hand over his ears, and the other with hand over his eyes. Without warning I make a gesture and say "Catch," and toss it to a boy in the front row.

I say, "Take a look at it, and pass it to the student beside you. I want you to study it, and for next time, write me a short paper on what you make out of it."

It's not what they are expecting. The room begins to hum as the little enigmatical figures are passed from hand to hand.

I say, "You can write on anything that comes into your mind, but try to make it your personal response. You don't have to go to a library and read anything. Just tell what you are thinking.

Your paper can be a description, or an interpretation, or you can go back in your life and discuss some experience you have had that one or all the figures reminds you of. Or, you can, if you please, discuss a person, or a story, or some current event you read about in the paper, anything at all that you can associate with these carvings."

For some reason, the class has been receptive. Something I said or the way I said it became contagious. At the end of the hour, I pass the three little monkeys around from hand to hand

again, and remind them to come to class with something written for us all to think about. "Make it one page or only a paragraph. Don't try to exhaust the subject. Just zero in on something you think worth saying, and write it down even if you're afraid it is foolish, as long as it means something to you. You can talk with each other, but each one of you, so far as possible, try to come up with something original."

-5-

My afternoon class in American Literature seemed to go better, perhaps because I didn't make the mistake of hobnobbing with the students before the bell rang.

On Tuesday, I tried to go through the same rigmarole in my two Freshman English classes as what had seemed to work well on Monday. I could see it was going to be hard to cook up the same atmosphere of spontaneity in more than one class on the same subject. But I would have to make a stab at it.

-6-

After supper on the second Monday, after my first week of classes and things had begun to settle down, I had a phone call from Dr. Wright:

"Do you have Ernest Hemingway's To Have and Have Not on your American Literature reading list?"

"Yes."

"We've had a complaint from one of your students."

"That list is optional. It's not required reading."

"We think the best way to handle this is for you to remove it from your list."

"The students don't have to read it."

"Well, think about it. I'll call you again tomorrow after you've had time to think about it."

The next night, when he called I said I had thought it over. "I can't take the book off the list."

"Are you sure? Have you thought it over?"

"Yes, I have and I'm sure. I won't take it off."

"Then we'll have to decide what to do about it."

On Wednesday when I got back after my afternoon class, Mrs. Ireland told me,

"President Gray's secretary wants you to call her. She left her phone number."

Miss Peaslee didn't ask when I would be free or anything like that, she said, "President Gray would like you to come over."

"When?"

"Right now, as soon as you can get here."

At least I wouldn't have the torture of a long wait. When I got there, I was ushered into the President's Office. He unlimbered himself from behind his desk, a big hulk of a man, fully as tall as I remembered. He greeted me with the same clearing of throat I remembered from our meeting in Old Orchard.

"Harrumph. Young man, I hope you are enjoying our fine September weather."

"Yes, it's beautiful weather."

"Classes going well, I hope?"

"Very well."

"Harrumph. Mr. Glazier, can you read Hemingway without getting excited?"

"No, Sir, I cannot. He's a very exciting writer."

"Harrumph, I mean, well, I mean can you read him without getting, well, excited?"

"I cannot, but all the excitement is not sexual. In our course we have another book with sexual content. It's required reading."

"Harrumph. What is that?"

"Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter."

"Harrumph. I understand it's that kind of a book."

There was a long pause as if he waited for me to make some further response. I made none.

On Thursday, I had another phone call from Dr. Wright.

"President Gray and I have a solution to your problem. We have decided to remove the book from the library."

"Well, I wonder, if you're going to do that, why don't you let somebody who appreciates it have it?"

"I'm glad we reached a satisfactory conclusion on the Hemingway book. Goodnight, Lyle."

"Goodnight, Dr. Wright."

I never mentioned this to my classes. The title remained on my list for outside reading. Nobody ever reported on it.

-7-

Before first papers were due in American Literature, I spent some time reminding my two classes I wanted them to write a personal response to some part of one of the assignments. It was not to be a report with footnotes on what some scholar had said, I wanted a firsthand reaction to some detail. It needn't be a summary, or a response to a whole work.

"Pick out something that affects you as central and important. The important thing is that it should shed light on what you consider to be the core meaning of the work. It needn't be a long paper, not more than a page. It can be just a meaty paragraph. Let us know clearly what you've selected and then make a concise and straightforward explanation, making sure you understand why you feel strongly about it."

Out of the sixty students in the two classes, every paper came in on time the Monday the papers were due. I had resolved to get them back the next day, and sat up all night Monday and Tuesday and by Wednesday had all the papers commented on and graded and had selected outstanding examples for reading in class. I have decided to devote the full hour to reading papers aloud and encouraging students to discuss them.

Although I had put in that strenuous weekend to get all the papers graded and recorded, in the big 8 o'clock section I expected to face some antagonism. There was still scepticism about whether the teenage boy who had jumped up the first day

and taken command of the class was really capable of doing so. Miss Roberts, in the front row, a member of the debating team, after I expressed a critical opinion, had a way of turning around to face Mr. Pusey, that thirty-five year old clergyman in the back row, to see whether he confirmed my judgment.

I had selected the example papers with care and to my joy student reaction was lively and confirmative. Miss Roberts and Mr. Pusey were both supportive.

I had to hurry on to my freshmen, whom I had had little time to prepare for but that class went well also.

I scanted lunch to recheck a few of the papers for the 2 o'clock American Literature class and had to scramble to collect a handful of A papers to read aloud. I felt good about that class. From the very first day our rapport had been excellent.

Perhaps because I was offguard I ran into trouble. It was a paper on "The Maypole of Merrymount." The student had gone to the library and found an article by a Harvard Professor, Perry Miller, drawing a distinction between the Plymouth Colony and the Massachusetts Bay Colony. He called the Pilgrims "Separatists" because they believed in purifying the Church by withdrawing from the Church of England, and he called the Massachusetts Bay Colony "nonseparatists" because they thought the Church could be purified from within. I had read somewhere in our notes that Thomas Morton of Merrymount had called the Pilgrims "those precise Separatists" and the paper clarified and confirmed that. After reading the paper, I declared, "It's my idea of an A paper."

Miss Rosencrantz, a senior and debater, and until now always my good friend, raised her hand to complain, "But, Mr. Glazier, this paper does exactly what you told us not to do. It's a research paper."

I interpreted her to be saying she disagreed with the grade, and I said, "I'm the teacher, and reserve the right to grade a paper as I see fit." Miss Rosencrantz dug in and

debated the issue, and I held my ground. I was out of sorts. Miss Rozencrantz was out of sorts. I went back to my room feeling I had forever lost the good will of that class.

To make it worse, at the beginning of the next class, I repeated my authoritarian claim to being the final judge in grading papers. It was embarrassing when Ladora Davis and Fanny Longfellow took pains to stop after class and without mentioning the friction, tried to smooth my feathers by asking trivial, innocuous questions about remarks I made on their papers, by no means complaining, simply giving me notice that they were still my friends.

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A fortnight later on a Saturday evening after supper Mrs. Ireland came to knock on my door to say that one of my students had come to the door and wished to speak to me.

"It's a Mr. Bowditch. He says he is a sophomore in your American Literature class."

I recognized him, three rows back from my desk, little fellow -- Bowditch, Arthur Bowditch -- always courteous, polite, attentive, even admiring. I had always felt I could count on him, but we had never exchanged words except during class.

"Tell him to come up."

When I asked where he came from, he said, "Thompsonville, Connecticut. A mill town, just over the line from Springfield."

Then he said, "I didn't want it to happen to you. I didn't want anybody to not know how much you wanted us to like you."

I thought at first that was what he came for, to comfort me, but in a minute, he was complaining about Peter Bertocci, his last year teacher of Psychology:

"He asked us to write a confidential autobiography. He wanted us to level with him. Anything troubling us we could tell him. It would be between him and the writer. He gave us a chance to unload any problems. We could absolutely trust him. I trusted him. I told him I had worked in a factory. I liked

the men. I liked older men so much. When they became friendly, I wanted them to kiss me. Was there something wrong with me?"

I said, "There's nothing wrong with you."

"One day one of the men kissed me. I thought I would collapse, it was so wonderful."

Why was he confiding in me, another stranger? Did he want me to kiss him? I would have been happy to hold him and comfort him.

I grabbed my jacket and said, "Let's go for a walk."

We walked north from the Chapel, then swung east to a crossroads and north again out into the country. When the street rose onto a low ridge, we turned and looked at the lighted campus and town behind us. We looked at the stars.

I asked, "Do you have any friend?"

"Have you noticed? I am always with Ladora Davis. Peter called her to his office and warned her about me. He told her I am a homosexual. She is trying to help me. She thinks what Peter did is unethical."

I wondered what he noticed about me that made him confide in me. I got him to talk about his home and how he was able to come to Bates. It was a long story and lasted all the way back to Mrs. Ireland's. I told him not to worry. He would be all right. I said goodnight there on the sidewalk. I think he may have told Ladora Davis. We seemed to have a bond. In class I treated them like everybody else, but I felt there was something linking us together. Even after the tension in the class wore off over my foolish handling of the argument over that paper and the class started going well again, I was aware of a special bond between the three of us. Arthur didn't come back to see me. Second semester they were both in my class again. They and Fanny Longfellow, a few rows back from my desk, in the middle, always sitting together.

I was hearing from Amy three times a week. We were both starting new jobs in strange places. Like me, I knew she was lonely. It was flattering to have her confiding in me. I could see she was weaving a net around me.

She wanted me to come for Thanksgiving. By the same mail I got an invitation from Les and Bean for a houseparty down in south central Connecticut, southeast of Hartford. "You will like it. We have invited a number of young men friends we are sure you will like." I accepted Amy's invitation. I would take a bus to Boston, shift to Greenfield, then up to Brattleboro for a connection to Bennington. On the way back I would stay overnight with Clayt and Abby, and have a chance to see Larry.

-10-

A couple weeks before Thanksgiving Holiday, I had to face an unexpected ordeal. I learned that once a semester every faculty member was supposed to have a shot at presenting a ten-minute program for daily chapel in front of the student body and faculty and visitors. The thought scared the life out of me. I watched other faculty. It seemed easy for them. There was a lectern to hide behind, but even so I was afraid I might drop in a dead faint to be facing a thousand people. I was reading Harriet Monroe's Poetry: A Magazine of Verse as issues came to the Library. My presentation came near the celebration of the magazine's twenty-fifty anniversary, so I decided on that subject. I rehearsed in my room. I talked about Miss Monroe and some of the poets -- Sandburg, and Aiken and Millay and Leonie Adams. I wasn't sure I had ten minutes worth. That evening Mrs. Ireland asked Buddy if he heard me, and he said, "Yes, a thousand times over and over again. I heard it so many times I could have given it myself." Eddie Wright called me to congratulate me: "Some of the lists of poets could have been shorter, but it was an average presentation and on the whole you did well." I was alive and that was enough for me. But I was already worrying over second semester. I had given the only

talk I could think of. Where would I ever find another tailor-made subject like that one?

-11-

I was hearing from Shep about once a month. In his junior year at Tufts. He was begging me to buy a cheap car and drive the two of us to the west coast for him to see his high school sweetheart, the radio singer, and we could pick up "Mumsy" his mother in Portland, and take her with us down the coast to San Francisco to stay with their friends, the Harrisons. Dr. Porter had given me a pass to the Huntington Avenue Y if I ever wanted to stay in Boston, so I stayed overnight there Tuesday before Thanksgiving, and took a subway to Harvard Square where Shep met me and we had supper in a coffee shop. He told me next time I would have to stay with him in his fraternity house.

"Any weekend there will be an empty bunk in my room."

Back at the Y, I took my towel and went to the basement for a shower, and found myself next to a tall man who began to get a terrific hardon, and I got one too, and had to hurry to my locker, my towel draped over my midriff. He followed me.

"Do you have a room?"

"Yes."

"Mind if I come up?"

I didn't dare take him and slept all night thinking of him, nursing my hardon and wishing I had more courage.

-12-

In the morning I get up early and hurriedly shower and shave in the communal bathroom. Although I am still partway under the spell of last night's emotional binge, nobody notices. I am anonymous and inconspicuous. Other early risers, slamming in and out, seem preoccupied with their own business. Going down in the elevator, when the lift stops at other floors for others, like me carrying their luggage, I squeeze into a corner as if I have guilt printed on my face, but nobody pays the

slightest attention. At the checkout desk, also, the clerks don't notice anything. Up the street, at the coffee shop where I have breakfast, I am getting used to the fact that my midnight fantasies have left no incriminating mark. By the time I finish breakfast and have traveled by subway to the bus depot, I am getting nearly back to normal, and can think of myself as a respectable college professor on vacation. I have a roundtrip ticket from Lewiston to Greenfield with exchanges for Brattleboro and Bennington. I have only one suitcase and carry it on the bus and put it in the overhead rack and settle down to correct freshmen compositions.

-13-

On the bus from Brattleboro there are hardly any passengers. I sit in a front seat next to the door. Already boarded, sitting in back of the driver across the aisle from me is a bundled up boy probably nineteen or twenty. He is carrying a white headed cane propped in the corner beside him. When the driver comes in after taking care of luggage and travels around to punch tickets, he leaves the boy for last.

I hear them talking.

"Now, don't worry about anything. I know exactly where you live. I'll stop at your house and blow the horn and wait for your mother or father to come for you."

The boy's voice is so low I can hardly hear it. "When we get home, you let me out. I can care for myself."

"I know you can, but cars travel fast on that stretch of highway. If nobody hears the horn, I'll get you across the road."

"Just to the edge. I know my way. I can manage from there."

I perk up my ears and know exactly who he is. Last year Leon Dunnell had a visitor from Perkins Institute for the Blind and brought him over to Mount Hermon. He played the piano more passionately than Leon. I wanted to befriend him but didn't

know how. When Leon had studied at Boston Conservatory, he volunteered at the Institute and had the young man for a pupil. He was very dependent on Leon except when he sat at the piano, then he lost himself in the music.

This is not that boy but a younger one, but I know where he came from, and I would have liked now to cross the aisle and sit beside him and introduce myself and shake hands with him. He was sitting alone, looking out the window as if he could see, as if he knew exactly where the bus was, laboring up grade around bends through the woods toward Marlboro, then picking up speed, zooming downhill, then up grade again to the Skyline Restaurant and lookout, where we let out a passenger. As the bus slowed down and crawled through Wilmington, idling at the stoplight, he was alert, as if catching every sound. I thought, he has been here many times. He is listening for cues to get the feeling of coming home for Thanksgiving. He has walked this street. I put down another impulse to talk to him. It is as if he knows each bend of the road. On the long drive up Searsburg Mountain, he hunches to the edge of his seat as if trying to help the bus make the grade. Now he's preparing to get out, buttoning his coat, gripping his cane, clutching a paperbag package. At the top of the mountain, he looks where Route 8 peels off to the left, then lets his eyes shift back to strain ahead. On the down grade he knows every twist and turn. Now the driver is slowing down. The boy is almost out of his seat when the driver brakes to a halt and pulls the handle of the arm to open the door. He reaches overhead for a battered suitcase and steadies the boy down the stairwell off the bus. They walk around the front, pausing while the driver looks ahead and back, but the boy already knows it is safe to cross. A woman is standing across the road on the path, the driver puts down the luggage and hurries back to put us in gear on our way. My last glimpse of the boy and his mother is cut off as we lurch forward. I think

it would not have been right for me to have spoiled the boy's anticipation with my idle talk, for my consolation not for his.

-14-

In the morning early, before breakfast, I pull myself out of bed, and go out into clean, crisp November, and find my way through the horseshed, up a pair of stairs into a corridor leading to the main barn. Opening ahead, the vault soars at least three stories above the floor. On both sides of a central space wide enough to hold a hay wagon with a rack on it loaded with hay, and long enough to hold two at a time, one ahead of the other, the mows up to the rafters are overflowing. From below I can hear the chirr of milking machines and the shifting of cattle in their stalls. I find the flight of stairs twisting down into the milking shed. At my shoulder there's a hole in the floor with a trapdoor for forking hay from the barn down into the basement cowshed.

I stop on the landing and take my bearings, bending to peer under the low ceiling. Walter has two milking machines each connected by four suction caps to the tits of two cows that are busily chewing their cuds as they pull hay out of the manger. Loose skin along their rumps shivers with pleasure as they enjoy the relief of having their full bags emptied by the caressing fingers of the gently humming machines. Walter is on a three legged stool between the two cows being milked. The air is warm and damp from the allnight body heat of his milking cows. The sweet, heavy smell of ensilage saturates the warm air.

When I get to the cement floor, on my left are two closed-in shoulder-high oblong bins, each with a cow and newborn sucking calf. Between the bins along the ceiling is a track from which hangs an overhead trolley, repainted, its sides splattered with cowshit. It's resting close against a back door with a T-shaped hole above it for the track to pass outside. I touch the trundle and it moves easily along its track. As I

pass Walter, he notices me for the first time, and abruptly stands up holding the milking stool..

"You'll get your shoes messed up with cowshit. And watch out if one of them lifts her tail. She'll let go on you in no time at all if she feels like it."

He busies himself removing the suction cups from the tits.

He says, "I've finished the last one. It's not right for you to be doing this in your good clothes. If you'll carry this pail into the separator room, I'll carry the milking machines and we'll go up to breakfast."

-15-

Thanksgiving dinner is served on a diningroom table moved into the long room in front of the fireplace. I am the only company. Compared to Thanksgiving at gramp's we are formal. It's the same loaded table but without the crowd and the buzz of children.

The phone rang, and Mrs. Niles picked up the receiver listened for a minute, then asked, "Well, you got in, didn't you?" and after another minute said, "I did too," and hung up.

She said, "That was Mrs. Eldred. We spent all day last Tuesday going to Williamstown Library to look up family history in order to join D. A. R.

"We spent all morning working in the library, then went to the Williamstown Inn for lunch. We neither of us said a word about our discoveries till Mrs. Eldred finally couldn't hold in any longer.

"She said, 'I'm descended from an old French king.'

"I said, 'That's funny, I am too.'

"'It wouldn't be Charlemagne, would it?'

"I said, 'I'm descended from him, too.'

"We thought it a great coincidence. In the afternoon we both found out that in a roundabout way we are both descended from Revolutionary War soldiers, and that was a great blessing

because now we can join the Bennington Chapter of D.A.R. That means you girls are eligible, too."

The phone beside the table rang and Mrs. Niles handed the receiver to Walter, who had a long mostly "Yes" and "Yes" and now and then a "You don't say!" conversation, and finally he said, "I'm sitting at table, and I'll call you back later."

He went back to eating his cold turkey, and Olive asked, "What was that all about?"

"It was Leon Eldred. Mr. Irons has learned we can incorporate and keep the Village from gobbling up the Rural Schools and making us pay their deficit for them."

The phone rang again, and this time it was for Olive, who said "Yes." and "Not right now" and hung up.

Her mother asked, "Was that George?"

"Yes."

Amy said, "Now it's my turn."

But the phone didn't interrupt us again, and we could finish dinner. It was a very good dinner, beginning with homecanned blackberry juice. Then a large gobbler stuffed with onions and chestnuts and breadcrumbs and a tureen of brown gravy and, some of Walter's Hubbard squashes, and either baked sweet potatoes or white potatoes and cut glass bowls of apple sauce and cranberry sauce and for dessert a choice between homegrown pumpkin pie and homemade mince pie with Vermont cheddar cheese; all if it topped off with coffee with heavy cream. As usual, Walter salted his potato and squash till both were white. He sure loved salt.

-16-

In the evening we went down to a big farmhouse on South Stream and played Five Hundred with Henry and Olive Thompson and Amy's and Olive's cousins Margaret and LeGrand. Another cousin, Arthur, had gone in to town and we didn't see him. There was also a very old grandmother, the mother of Mrs. Thompson, who came in from her bedroom to meet "Amy's boyfriend" but she soon

disappeared back to her room. LeGrand was another teacher, a graduate of Castleton, who was teaching the Bushnell School that year. The two families were related together on the distaff through another family called the Brattons. There was talk about a Walter Bratton who had some sort of wayside store in Williamstown and two spinster sisters, Ethel, who was the famous Principal of the Ethical Culture School in New York City and her sister Belle, a seamstress, who, every summer used to live with the family for a whole month catching up on sewing needed to keep the girls furnished with clothing for school and Walter in shirts and Mrs. Niles in dresses and the whole family supplied with underclothing. It turned out to be a long day, and after an evening of Five Hundred and another feast of homemade ice cream, and cake and coffee, we were all of us stuffed and bleary eyed and ready for bed.

-17-

Between Thanksgiving and Christmas three events happened in quick succession.

(1) Leon Dunnell wrote that he would like to come visit me and I wrote inviting him. He would like to be asked to give a concert at Bates, and I arranged for him to meet Gus Bushman, German teacher, who was chairman of the committee on guest speakers. Leon arrived on a Friday, and that night went upstairs with me to play bridge with Eleanor McCue, Nellie Mae Lang, and Earl McGee. Leon considered himself semiprofessional, so after a half hour, I bowed out and went down to my room and corrected freshman compositions. I could hear peals of laughter dominated by Leon's effeminate chatter coming down the stairwell. Around midnight they were still playing, and, leaving the light burning at my desk, I brushed my teeth, and crawled into bed, crowding myself as far as I could against the

wall, and bunching the bedclothes around my shoulders. Half an hour or so later I was wakened by Eleanor sitting on my bededge. She said, "We're about to have coffee and ginger snaps and wondered if you'd like to join us, but I guess you don't."

Three quarters asleep, I murmured, "Thanks, Eleanor," and she went back upstairs. Sometime later Leon came down, tiptoed around, used the john, turned out the light and settled heavily on his side of the bed. I turned, snuggled against him, and we masturbated each other and I turned my back and immediately drifted into my deep sleep. We had breakfast at the Hotel with Leon insisting on paying. I tried to get in touch with Professor Bushman, but never could get an answer. In late morning, Leon

left to return to Northfield.

That night when the regular foursome returned for Saturday night amateur Bridge, Eleanor announced to us all, "Lyle, when I went to see if you wanted to join us for coffee, you were hunched in the smallest possible space, practically hanging off the edge of the bed."

(2). The next weekend Eleanor announced she was going home, and Nellie Mae decided to go home to Lisbon Falls, and Earl had his yearly invitation as Eddie Wright's guest for a trip to Boothbay Harbor. So on Thursday afternoon when I had to go down to get a haircut in the barbershop in the Hotel, I called Alanson E. Skillings, my high school principal, in Waterville, getting his number through information, and invited him to come down on Saturday for overnight. He didn't seem in the least surprised to have me call him after ten years. He would come on the late afternoon train, and return Sunday morning.

He looked just the way he used to, hardly a day older. He was working in a factory in his home town. We had dinner together at the Vosmi, went down to the Princess Theatre for their continuous performance movie, and after coffee, returned

to 26 Mountain Avenue. Mr. and Mrs. Ireland were in bed, and their grandson home for the weekend. After we got into bed, he did most of the talking, chiefly about his philosophy of life. He was a homegrown Yankee sage on the order of Robert Frost. I let him spin out his humanitarian wisdom. Then I settled on my back and let him caress me and push down my pajama bottoms and blow me. He was good at it. Now and then, coming out from under the blankets, he would say, "You are beautiful." He didn't ask anything for himself. I was glad to have it settled what I had known for a long time that he really had been Warren Billings' lover and there was no doubt he had gone into Richard Tyler's room on that Washington, 1927, trip. I could enjoy him with a kind of philosophical detachment, as if the visit were engineered to settle my curiosity, but I liked what he did to me, too, and paid no price in personal guilt.

Sunday morning, outside on the platform waiting for the northbound train, he gave me a parting valediction as if sure we would never meet again, "Lyle, I am so proud of you, and like to think you profited from my teaching at Northfield. Remember this: if you give your best to the world, the best will come back to you. Never lose faith."

(3). I have a Christmas invitation from Josephine Johnson inviting me to Webster Grove, Missouri, for the holidays. I have already accepted an invitation from Amy, but it feels good to have this invitation from Josephine. She wrote, "I have had my happiness with ice cream and cake, and I want to thank you for being my friend. I would love to have you come here for Christmas."

I wondered if maybe she meant she had a younger sister or friend in mind for me, but, anyway, I was already promised and I didn't give a thought to going to Missouri. Having just paid Larry's second semester tuition for Mount Hermon, where on earth would I have found money for traveling to Webster Grove? I knew she didn't have a lot of money either: once when I told her,

during our walk in the woods at Bread Loaf, that I knew she was a rich novelist who had won a Pulitzer, she laughed and said, "Oh, that thousand dollar windfall!" I really liked her a lot but how much of it was because I was infatuated with being in love with a novelist? She had sensibly put a stop to that fantasy, but kindly, with no damage to my vanity.

-18-

We are warned in a Note to the Faculty that the Tuesday before Christmas must be counted as a full teaching day for faculty and students. "It is important, therefore, that Monday and Tuesday, you meet your classes for a full hour."

For my two classes Tuesday morning, on the spur of the moment I go to the Library and find a copy of Dickens' Christmas Carol" and read aloud from it quite badly. The first hour I haven't anywhere near enough time to finish, and have to scramble to improvise an unsatisfactory ending. For the second class, I don't manage even that well. Attendance is good, but halfway through the hour students are so restive I simply close the book and walk out on them .

Arriving in Northfield, at Clayt's and Abby's for overnight before going on to Bennington, I don't have presents for anybody. By accident I meet Joe Billman in the drugstore and talk with him about the days when I was his handler and he the spearer of tobacco in the tobacco fields on the riverbank. He invites me to stop in at his house to meet his wife, who shows me the silk handkerchiefs she has been embroidering with folk designs from the Old Country in Lithuania. The silk is so soft and astonishingly white, and the designs so colorful and fresh. She has flat boxes just right to hold a handkerchief, and they cost only a dollar. I buy five of them, one for Amy, one for Abby, one to send to Josephine Johnson; and for Penny Stanton, that Smith College teacher who lent me her car to drive to Old Orchard, I buy two of them for one box. It leaves me only five

dollars from my last ten dollar bill. Fortunately, I bought a round trip bus to get back to Lewiston.

I ought to put into the envelope a note to Penny apologizing, as I never did, for borrowing her car for that trip to Old Orchard and then leaving her the keys and the address of the filling station in Middlebury where she would have to pay for having the flat fixed.

I still don't have any money to send her, and I don't have any reasonable excuse, so I simply write a Thank you and Merry Christmas and let her keep right on thinking I am the skinflint I probably am.

BOOK II.15WICKED...and Spotless as the Lamb

Bates, spring '38Chapter Fifteen

-1-

We proctor our own examinations. Usually there are a half dozen exams going on at the same time in the Gym. I baby my students, pacing the aisles for questions, and giving husky short phrases that supply no solid information but may steer the questioner in a direction he has chosen but is not quite sure it is right.

I read exams as scrupulously as I read papers, with marginal and terminal comments, so that the number grade supplements a comment already committing me.

When all is done, I feel good about both the freshman sections and the two American Literature sections, one of which gave me anxiety tremors that have pretty much worn away.

-2-

When I take the roll at the second semester first meeting of the 8:00 a.m. American Literature section, I find that Mr. Pusey, the Unitarian/Universalist thirty-five-year-old minister with a small parish near Lisbon Falls is not listed. I don't know whether he has dropped the course or moved to Berkleman's or Whitbeck's section.

More than his absence, what bothers me is the tardiness of seven of the women whose names are listed. All through our introductory look at Walt Whitman's "A Noiseless Patient Spider," my mind keeps wandering to the empty seats and wondering if they will come in.

I had spent a lot of time preparing the poem as an example of the way Whitman begins with a specific natural event and extracts from it a universal human equation. I don't begin by saying this. I read the poem aloud while they follow in their text. Then I ask for discussion. The first comment is on the

first line, where all the focus is on the "spider" as if Whitman is trying to divest himself of his own being and enter into the being of some underestimated natural creature far down on our scale of importance.

I love the way I was right in thinking if you can turn a class loose from a right beginning the class can almost be trusted to find its way into the heart of a poem while the teacher says almost nothing. Yet my mind is whizzing along also on that other track. I am asking myself if those seven women students are tardy or have they resigned from my class?

I am carrying along this double mix of elation at the way the class has picked up the thread and doing my teaching for me, while I am standing in front of them with my mind split between what is developing in the discussion and what may be lurking in the background of my relation to the class if those women, every one of whom I know, and cherish, don't show up.

They haven't while we go on to the second line where the focus shifts to Whitman the observer. A juggling act between "spider" and the mind of the poet is continued all the way through to the very end "O my soul." It is a new student to my class, a Jeremy Sternwall, switched from Paul Whitbeck, who pointed out that what the poem really seems to be saying is that the whole fabric of nature, both insect/animal and human seems to be balanced tenuously between body and spirit, in a baffling universe that could be frightening but could also be a great adventure.

-3-

At the very end of the hour, the door opens, and the mood we have created of discovery is broken -- for me at least -- when the seven missing women come in and stand at the rear of the room.

I'm fearful and, at the same time eager, as I give the assignment to read the first five segments of "Song of Myself" in light of what we have just learned. I ask them to pay

special attention to Section V, which we'll begin with on Wednesday.

As the class gathers itself together and files out, the seven approach my desk. Each has a change-of-class slip for me to sign. They have Paul Whitbeck's permission to transfer to him. I sign the slips without asking any questions and go back to 26 Mountain Avenue feeling as if my career is falling apart.

All three of my freshman class lists have remained practically the same, but the failure to reach and hold the loyalty of the seven dissenters crushes my spirit. I don't say a word about it at dinner with Earl and Eleanor and Nellie Mae. I'm pretty silent.

I get back to my room just in time to be called downstairs for a phone call from Eddie Wright. He informs me that he's in the middle of a crisis in registration for American Literature. Seven of my students have permission from Whitbeck to change to his section but to do so throws his class load and mine way out of whack. It's impossible at this late date to transfer seven of Paul's students to my class even if they're willing to be transferred. Eddie tells me he hates to do it, but he thinks he must insist on those students remaining in my class. Also, to protect the reputation of the department, he will come to my next class and be there to hear how it goes and, if necessary, make a report to the faculty committee on enrolment to see whether some exception to the usual procedure can be made. The usual procedure, where there are several sections, is to make an equal distribution of students among the sections. However, in this case since Paul's class is nearly straight lecture, and mine, from what he hears, is discussion, perhaps an exception could be made. There are enough seats in Paul's class to accommodate the seven; it's the workload that's in question, particularly the work load of required papers. He concludes by saying that he has heard good things about my teaching, and he doesn't want me to feel worried. He's sure everything can be worked out.

He wants to know the room and hour of my class, and says he'll be there promptly at eight Wednesday morning.

It doesn't console me that I've been hearing from students about Paul's lectures. His method is antithetical to mine. He is pouring information into their notebooks, while I'm trying to open their minds. I could say that Paul is the scholar, and I the creative critic, but my mind is so fussed up I can hardly take refuge in anything favorable to my cause. The bare fact is that seven of my students have asked to be switched to Paul Whitbeck. To make the situation worse, in giving Wednesday's assignment, I had in mind that Section 5 of "Song of Myself" is, like the spider lyric, also about the soul, and I know very well the homosexual implications of that segment. My mind is awlirl.

-4-

Eddie Wright is on time, so are the seven truants, and so are all the other students, none of whom probably have any idea of the chasm whose brink I feel I'm standing on.

As a matter of fact, if Eddie Wright weren't there bugging me, I would be proud of the way the Monday students have grasped the method of analysis introduced by the spider/soul lyric. We proceed the same way. In Segment V of "Song of Myself," when I turn the class loose on the first line, Sternwall leads the way by grabbing hold of the contrast between "soul" and "the other I am." Someone cuts in to comment on the contrast in language between the philosophical word "soul" and the prosaic, almost statistical "the other I am."

I don't know how many in the class notice Eddie's presence. Probably most of them. Yet, with surprisingly little nudging, the class makes its way through the images, through "loafing in the grass" (the opposite to the great American work ethic) and on to "loose" and "lull" and "hum." When we arrive at the third stanza, with its eroticism, and somebody asks, "Who are these people?" I counter with "Is it a man and a woman? Or is it two

men?" In the total silence, I suggest that Whitman's imagery is "Uranian," and one of his great themes is comradeship, found all the way through his Civil War poems. But he balances that with the procreative role of women. I ask them to notice the words "God" and "brother" and "men" and then the word "women" and the word "sisters." And from there Sternwall practically leaps on the words "love" and "lovers." And others pitch in and go on to the "leaves" and the "ants" and the "scabs" and the "worm" and the "stones" and the "elder" and the "mullein" and the "pokeweed." And we are back to the universal harmony of man and nature, where we were Monday when we read "The noiseless, patient spider."

For Friday, I ask them to return to the first four lyrics of "Song of Myself" and think about the title and what it means. And there the class bell rings, and I'm proud of the students who carried on the discussion, and wretchedly aware of the fact that not one of the seven renegades said one word in the whole hour.

Eddie Wright came up as I was gathering together book and papers to get to my freshman class. He seemed very friendly. He said, "Interesting class. If you can possibly make it, I would like you to come to my house for lunch."

I said, "Today?"

And he said, "Yes, at noon today. There'll be only you and me. And don't worry." You can bet your boots I am worrying.

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At lunch, Eddie tells me again he was impressed with the way I got the students involved in specific analysis. He says it has been decided that it would throw off balance the whole concept of fair distribution of workload if Whitbeck absorbs those students. Eddie has sent notes to all seven advising them to stay in my class. He knows they are bright students and will come around in time. As a matter of fact, he has had three of

them in his freshman section and has checked with Berkelman for the other four, and they are all good students and cooperative. He is sure I will have no trouble with them. I hope he is right, but I'm apprehensive.

-6-

I have a letter from Mel. Last June he resigned from his job in Northfield and took one as Principal of the Grammar School in Paxton, a small town north of Worcester. He is getting more pay and they have a nice house, and he and Bernice would love to have me visit them. He gives me their phone number.

I've been hearing from Skip promoting his wish to persuade me to buy a car so the two of us can travel to Seattle and Portland and San Francisco to visit his family and friends.

"We'll have a ball, and it will be a good time for you to get some idea of the rest of the country besides the little strip you know in the Northeast: I have written so much about you to Mumsy, she's crazy to meet you, and it's high time you pry yourself loose from New England."

The problem is the car. Can I possibly scrape together enough to buy a second hand car for the trip? I go to a dealer in Auburn, and he shows me a Chevrolet roadster that is selling for a little over \$200. It has a spare tire and canvas top and side curtains, and I can imagine what it would be like to travel across country in it. I tell the dealer I really can't afford a year round car, and he says, "Tell you what. When you get ready, let me know. This car may be sold by then. But I guarantee to find something for you, and I'll buy it back when you return."

So I call Mel, and arrange to come in two weeks on a Saturday afternoon to stay overnight, and ask him whether he and Bernice could also put up Skip for that night, so we can discuss the trip. Mel says, "Sure, we have a spare room and double bed, and we'd love to have you both."

I phone Skip and he'll go by bus to Worcester and Mel and I can meet him there. He'll not be able to arrive till late evening, and will have to leave soon after Sunday dinner, but he's excited over the chance to make a pitch for our trip west.

I go by Boston and Maine, changing in North Station for Fitchburg. In Fitchburg, in the Boston and Maine station, I have to go to the john, and in the filthy cabinet am sitting on the crapper, when I hear a creak of hinges and look up and a middle-aged man is peeking in. He says, "Sorry," and quickly pulls-to the door partway, then stands looking in at me. Then he begins to work his hand in his pants pocket.

In a minute I have a hardon, and he takes his free hand and from the outside of his pocket lifts up his cock and, still working on it from inside, gives me an idea of the length of it. He motions me to lift my hand, and I show him my cock and he unzips himself and reveals a chunky cock with a head bulbous and swollen. He withdraws his hand and juices it with saliva and swabs the head under the flap of his foreskin. He motions me to stand. When I'm standing awkwardly, my trousers sagging from my knees, he begins breathing hard, lets go his cock and inserts one hand and then the other under the lapels of my jacket and inside my shirt, and starts rubbing then pinching my nipples. He unbuttons my shirt and bends down and inserts his tongue and purses his lips over my right nipple, sucking and tightening his lips, and reaches around back of me and cups my buttocks and draws me towards him.

I am almost dying, when suddenly he lets go saying, "Back in a minute," and withdraws, letting the door of the cabinet gently close. I'm waiting for him to return. The outside door of the men's room sighs to a close. It is very quiet. I wait for his return, but he doesn't come. Finally, I wipe myself clean, pull my clothes together and reach for my heavy topcoat. When I reach into the inside pocket for my billfold, it isn't there. I am in a panic. I know it's not in my rear trouser

pocket, because I took it out and put it in my overcoat before I sat down. I search every pocket in my pants. Nothing. Nothing in any pocket. Nothing in my inside jacket pocket. I can't believe that I've been robbed.

Trembling, I go out and look up and down the station platform. I look into the waiting room. Nobody except the clerk at the ticket window.

I go out and walk the street to the bus stop and find a bus leaving for Worcester and Paxton in three quarters of an hour. In desperation I go to the police station and stand outside, then screw up courage to go in. I tell the cop at the desk I came in on the Boston and Maine westbound train, and was taking a leak at the double urinal, when a thickset man came and stood at the other urinal. I had my topcoat open and flung back. I think he stole my billfold. The cop on duty calls another one, who also listens to my story. They want a description of the man, and I describe him: middle-aged, thickset, florid complexion, poorly dressed, and a wen on his right cheek. They want to know exactly how the two of us were standing at the urinals, and I stick to my story, that I was standing there pissing with the flap of my overcoat flung back. The man came and stood beside me and took his piss, and left quickly. When I buttoned my topcoat, I found my billfold gone. The cop on duty tells me to take a chair and wait while the other one goes to the depot. In fifteen minutes he comes back with my empty billfold. None of my documents are missing but the money and my return ticket are gone. They ask me to tell my story again. I do. They ask me to describe the man. They know him, but shrug their shoulders. He will already have stashed the money. And besides I have no possible way to identify the bills even if I know I had roughly forty dollars. One of them goes to the bus depot and buys me a ticket to Paxton. I am trying not to think they doubt my story, but it's clear they have no further

interest in me beyond the record they jotted down for their file.

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In Paxton, Mel and Bernice are waiting at the bus depot. After we get to their house, I tell them about the pickpocket getting my money and return ticket. They are very concerned about the criminal who stole my money. Mel says, "Fitchburg is notorious." I had been fearful they wouldn't believe my story, but the more I tell it the more credible it seems and I lose my fear of not being believed. Mel lends me forty dollars that I'll return as soon as I can get to the bank in Lewiston.

We have supper and drive to the bus depot in Worcester to meet Skip. He has a briefcase full of folders from a travel agency in Boston. He and I pour over them in our bedroom before undressing and climbing into bed. I haven't even mentioned the theft of my money, but I'm wondering if I can possibly afford to buy a car and have anything left to pay my share for lodging and meals. Skip says we will stay in Messina one night with Bomps, his mother's father who has a second wife. From there we'll go across into Canada and through Toronto and western Ontario to Windsor, where we'll stay overnight. Next we spend two nights in Chicago with his Uncle Ed and his wife, and from there Skip will have spaced reservations in small towns all the way across to Cody, Wyoming, from where we'll visit Yellowstone and turn up into Washington where we'll stay a week with the Rutherfords, close friends of Mumsy. Going from there we drive down the coast to Portland and Auntie Ed.

Mumsie will be joining us in Portland for a trip up the Columbia River, from where we will turn south into California and Crater Lake to San Francisco where we'll stay a week with the Harrisons, close friends of Mumsie. Then we'll come back over the Lincoln Highway all the way back through Yosemite to Salt Lake City and Iowa City, where I'll have a chance to visit with John Engel and the editors of American Prefaces. They've

already published some of my poems. In LeRoy we'll stay overnight with Amy, and then drive to New York City for overnight at the expense of John Farrar, Editor at Farrar and Rinehart. After a night in New York, we'll cut up to Northfield for a visit with Clayton and Abby, and then on to Somerville to drop off Skip. From there I'll turn the car back at the garage I bought it from in Auburn.

A big load is taken off my mind when Skip says, "Since you're furnishing the car and gas, Mumsy insists on paying for the motel reservations all the way west and down the coast and returning back east. I'll make the reservations ahead of time through the same travel agent in Boston who furnished the fliers I brought with me."

For the first time the trip looks possible. If I can buy the car, all I'll need is pocket money. Since I'll be paying the second installment of Larry's Mount Hermon second semester tuition in April, my May, June, and July salary will be pretty much free except what I'll pay out for clothes for Larry and his first semester tuition at Middlebury if he is accepted there for 1938/9. If Middlebury doesn't accept him, there's a possibility he may come to Bates and live with me and get free tuition as my dependent.

By the middle of July at the end of Bread Loaf Summer School when Skip will be free, all these uncertainties will be settled. Skip will graduate from Tufts in June 1939 and hopes to have some kind of job in New York publishing through the influence of Mumsie's cousin John Farrar.

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During the night I wake up from sleep and find Skip tight up against me, his erection pressed into my buttocks. I carefully disengage myself and pull away, practically falling onto the floor on my side of the bed. In a few minutes he turns over and pulls to his side of the bed, and I can get back into my own space.

Back in Lewiston, I find a letter from Amy. We are writing twice a week now. I am more and more fond of her, but I wonder if I should get married. She seems much more confident than I am. In fact, I think she is courting me, not I courting her in the conventional manner:

April 25, 1938

Dear Lyle,

I am at Aunt Hopie's after supper, and have just had my music lesson with Miss Molly. I wish I were rooming here. I like Mrs. Dunn but she is cold and Aunt Hopie and Miss Molly are the family I have always dreamed of.

You have seen enough of my family to know that we are never loving. Mother loves me, I know, but she has always considered me a child. She spoiled my year in London by insisting Olive go with me, and Olive has always bossed me around like a four year old. Upstairs in bed on a cold night when we were sleeping together she would pounce on me and grab all the blankets, and I would have only the sheet.

And Dad, as you know, is tolerated. He's a barn husband. He and mother spend evening after evening at the kitchen table squabbling over the bookkeeping. You would think they are so jealous of each other they believe the other is cheating. Yet there is plenty to go round and to spare. We have never had to scrimp and save.

In fact, I have had a letter from Mother warning me against you. If I marry you, it will be the first time in my life, she says, I will have to worry about making ends meet. Now that you are abuying a car to go west, she thinks you are wasting your money. She has no understanding what it means that you are helping support Larry.

She tells me to expect to wear made over clothes, forgetting I have been wearing madeovers all my life. Olive

gets the new dress, I get it when she gets another. It was not until I got my first job and could provide for myself that I knew what it is to have a whole wardrobe of my own. Even at Middlebury I was wearing Olive's hand-me-downs.

If we both work for the first years, we can easily make a go of it. I can help you with Larry until he gets through Middlebury. I was so proud of him when you wrote he had passed College Boards. When we went to Middlebury, you and I didn't have to take them. That is one reason I chose Middlebury. I didn't want to follow on the heels of Olive to Mount Holyoke where Mother wanted me to go.

I am glad you and Skip will have the trip west, but I am really jealous and wish you would take me with you. But I know it's impossible. I will already be teaching school again by the time you are ready to start back from California.

You must come see me at the farm before you go. You can drive up from Gramp's once or twice while you're waiting for Skip to finish summer school. I think I can't live through the summer without seeing you. I'd better close this and get back to Mrs. Dunn's or she'll think I'm staying out all night. I suppose I should be grateful that she gives me breakfast. Some day I hope to have a home of my own where I can get meals for both of us and even if we have to budget, we can manage.

Affectionately,

April 30, 1937

Dear Amy,

Don't worry about not seeing enough of me. Now that I will have a car, I will probably spend the first half of the summer burning up the road between Moores Corner and Bennington. Before the summer is over you will be glad to be rid of me.

I guess I told you in my last that Skip and I are really going to make it. Mrs. Henryson has made it possible by underwriting lodging for both of us all the way to the Coast and back. If I furnish the car, she thinks it only right that Skip

should provide housing. A good deal of the time, apparently, we will be staying with his friends and relatives. I have even arranged it with the car dealer to bring the car back to him and he will make me a bid to buy it back after the trip. That is his idea that I hadn't counted on and I think it is wonderful.

One of the beauties of our arrangement is that Skip and his mother will plan our itinerary and make reservations from East to West and back East. Since I have a sketchy idea of geography and no idea at all about automobile routes, I'm delighted to leave the planning to them. Skip arrived at Melvin's with a bundle of road maps and travel agency brochures and gave me a pretty good idea where we will be going. We won't get into the American south but will take a real northerly route going west, and will come back across the middle of the country. I expect to see a lot of sights I have only read about. It may not be a hightoned cultural tour, but I'll end up with some familiarity with the northern half of our country. Even so, we'll miss out on some sights -- like, for example Niagara Falls, which I've been crazy to visit ever since I was five years old. Gram Glazier and Aunt Maud went there for a trip and sent me back home a week early rather than take me with them. Gram wanted to, but Aunt Maud thought I would be a pesky nuisance.

I am looking forward to the end of my first year at Bates. Meanwhile, I have just learned that I have to appear in chapel again and have decided to play the piano, and am pounding the ivory off the keys of the upright in the parlor here at the Irelands'.

I ought to be scared to death and am trying not to. Wish me luck.

Affectionately,

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For some reason I think it will be easy to play the piano rather than make another speech in chapel. In sheer

desperation, I put in hours practising Paderewski's Minuet a L'Antique and Richard Strauss's On Silent Woodland Path. I know the Minuet by heart and am reasonably sure that if I can hold myself together, I can conceal my amateur standing behind its flourishes. I've also memorized Schubert's Marche Militaire. These three pieces are the extent of my repertoire, but to perform two compositions like the Paderewski and the Schubert would be a bit too much, so I spend hours and hours relearning and polishing the delicate nuances of the Strauss. I think that if I say over and over enough times, "I'm not going to get nervous," I can hold my breath long enough to live through it, and when it comes to the date of the event, I do manage.

The next morning when I go to my 8 o'clock Freshman English, I'm greeted with an ovation when I enter. After class I feel trapped into accepting an invitation from Electra Frangedakis to attend a Sunday year-end recital for students of her piano teacher. Some of them play expertly. At the end of the student recitals, I am further trapped into complying with a request to repeat my Chapel triumph with a repeat performance. Perhaps because I had not anticipated the request by practicing thought control since I played in chapel, I don't do very well. In the condescension of the celebrated teacher I feel my reputation collapse. Too late, I suspect a frameup and realize I should have sat in my corner and refused to compete with the show pieces of the best students of the most eminent prima donna in Lewiston/Auburn.

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On the last Sunday in May, I'm invited to dinner at the home of Gus Buschman, Eleanor McCue's friend, and the chairman of our Committee on Guest Speakers. His wife serves a hearty German dinner, and afterward, Gus invites me to walk their dachshund with him and their two small children. They live on a side street west of campus, a neighborhood I've never explored. Almost at once we are on a path leading over railroad tracks to

the bank of the Androscoggin. There is a riverside grove and birds in treetops and a view over the turgid river to factories on the Auburn shore. I can hardly contain myself. I want to run on the paths and explore the whole bankside, but I restrain my enthusiasm.

Two nights later after supper, I invite Earl McGee to go with me to this unexplored territory, and this time I can't hold back. I leave him behind in my spurt over sandy paths along the bankside and through a tall grove to the north. When I return to Earl, I have to apologize for my bad manners. He seems to forgive me.

We are at the beginning of final exams, and I take my papers to the riverside, where I find a rocky promontory extending three or four yards toward the Bates Mills on the opposite shore. I use my brief case for a cushion and sit reading examinations. From time to time eyes stray to river eddies coursing off shore. I feel the tug and pull of flowing water, a surface tension hiding unseen currents and whirlpools out of which emerge unexpectedly a fragment of treetrunk, a broken frontseat of a car, castoff clothing. This is my natural element, I seem miles from campus. I've just finished a paper. The river breaks the spell of total absorption in what I've just read, and refreshed, I'm able to start another.

-12-

One day I have a note from President Gray asking if I'll look in afternoons "when convenient" on Senior class rehearsals for Sophocles' Antigone that the class will present at Commencement on the classical portico of the Library. The note explains that for years Prof Rob has presented a Greek play at graduation, but this semester he has suddenly gone on leave. The seniors have agreed to take over the production rather than having no play, but the President wonders if I will "look in from time to time and give any advice you think might be of

help." Apparently, I have no choice in the matter even though I know nothing about Greek drama.

On Wednesday afternoon, when I go to the quadrangle in front of the portico, the rehearsal is in progress. Professor Chase, retired Professor of classics, is already there and introduces himself. We stand there watching the rehearsal, neither of us interfering. Friday, when I return, Professor Chase doesn't appear. Again, the senior director is in charge, and I simply stand watching even though I sense that some of the actors are not happy with their director. The English of Lewis Campbell seems inflated and melodramatic, but it would take a genius familiar with the play to steer the cast through their lines with any semblance of naturalness, and I don't have that knowledge or talent.

The third rehearsal I attend is a dress rehearsal and the actress who has the part of Antigone complains about her extremely unflattering costume. When the director puts her down, she appeals to me, and I agree with her suggestion for a slight alteration that gives her more freedom of movement. This attempt to conciliate puts me in conflict with the director who is hiding his insecurity behind a mask of authority. He doesn't like at all my taking the side of the actress, so I retire even more into the sidelines and resolve not to interfere again. It will be a terrible production, and if I had my say, the entire performance ought to be scrapped, but I haven't been asked for my opinion. What I fear is that I will be held responsible for what is bound to be abject failure. I console myself with the thought that after the presentation on Class Day, I will be able to sneak away in my new roadster and be on my way to pick up Skip before anybody can blame me. At least this much is sure, nobody will ever suggest that I take over the yearly production of a Greek play in the absence of Prof Rob, who seems to be unaccountably banished to limbo.

I keep silent at a dinner at Eddie Wright's the evening before Class Day when a former assistant professor of drama, now producing Greek drama in modern dress at the University of British Columbia, is a guest. I wonder if he has come because he would like to be appointed to Prof Rob's position, for I have heard that for some reason, Prof Rob has retired to become Professor of Drama Emeritus.

On Class Day it pours, and the play is taken indoors to the front of the Chapel, where every flaw of diction and staging is accented. It is every director's nightmare, and I am glad not to be called forward to receive credit. Back at 26 Mountain Avenue, I find Eleanor suddenly hushing her voice when I enter, and I realize she has been entertaining Mrs. Ireland with the immensity of the disaster at the Chapel. I don't linger, but go straight to my room, and the next morning early I'm on my way to Tufts College to stop in on Skip and show him the Chevrolet roadster before going to Gramp's for the first six weeks of summer vacation..

BOOK II.16WICKED...and Spotless as the Lamb

Summer 1938Chapter Sixteen

-1-

Mrs. Bottom has gone, and Gramp has a new housekeeper, a past-middle-aged woman, Mrs. Elmira Swet from Pittsfield. Her husband had been superintendent of schools there. To my surprise I know who she is. Her son has to be Bill Swet that tenor in the Glee Club who was on the bus from Albany when I was stranded through Harry Owen's agreeing to change the bus route. I thought Bill Swet was rich. I would have given a lot if either he or Jim Kerr had offered to put me up for the night, but neither thought of it, and I was too shy to ask for help. I guess Mr. Swet must have left her penniless and she had no training for a professional career and had to search for unskilled employment.

This is the first housekeeping job Mrs. Swet ever had. I am just in time for haying season, and spend a week helping Gramp and Uncle Perry get in the crop. I park the Chevrolet in the dooryard and don't drive it. Mrs. Swet is impressed when she hears I'm teaching at Bates. She says Bill is taking teacher training courses in Albany Normal School. He had planned to attend law school, but all his plans had to change when his father died.

I have been there about a week when Gale Friend learns I am back. He has a houseguest, a school teacher from Queens, and they stop in and invite me for Gale's famous spaghetti dinner Thursday night at eight-thirty. Other guests will be Mrs. Hale, who lives in the house across Sawmill River from Bourne's store and her livein companion Aileen Wright. I have never met them but have heard about them. The house they live in was built on the cellar hole of the house where I was born.

I take a dip in the river beyond the coal kilns, and change into white flannels and a shortsleeved shirt, and from sneakers to black and white saddle shoes. The ladies are late and I have a chance to get acquainted with Victor Bornstein, who's known Gale since when he was a leading interior decorator in the city.

Gale is deep in spaghetti and hamburger meatballs and his famous tomato, onion/celery and oregano gravy. Victor is sitting at the kitchen table but not offering to help. He is short, past-middleaged, balding, fleshy and tubby with a skin that shines as if greased and a winsome rosebud mouth that he seems deliberately to straighten into a line while he is laying down the law to Gale.

"I warned you. Your trouble began when you married Irene. If you had had the sense not to, you would still be living on Park Avenue."

"Oh, Victor, we have a guest..."

"Gale, you have got to learn to face reality. You haven't a cent to your name. Who bought the hamburger and vegetables and beer for supper?"

"I still have my house."

"Yes, but who holds the mortgage? Who paid last year's taxes? Who sent over to the Bournes's and had the boys deliver a bucketful of ice? You have just got to come to face the truth. You can't continue. No income. No bank account. Irene stripped you of all you had and then dropped you."

"Not in front of Lyle, Victor! What will he think?"

He turns heroically to face me, "Lyle, you may as well know..."

The ladies have arrived in the dooryard, and Gale rushes out to the car. Victor continues to inform me:

"I'm his best friend, Lyle, the only friend left. He depends on me for everything." He purses his mouth into a disapproving button, then hurries to the door, changing his manner.

"Gloria, darling. And Aileen, how lovely of you to come. And how fresh you both look. --And like the Greeks bearing gifts!").

He gives each a peck on the cheek.

Aileen is carrying a platter of salad. Victor tries to relieve her of the platter -- greenleaf lettuce, cucumbers, ripe red tomatoes. She eludes him and places it on the table.

Mrs. Hale is talking to Gale, "It all came from our garden."

"How perfectly lovely," Victor gushes.

Aileen lifts the cover from the pot on the back burner, "Oh, Heavenly! However do you do it, Gale?"

Gale opens the cabinet above the stove and lifts down a widebellied, covered china soup tureen and ladles the sauce into it, then takes down a platter and heaps it with spaghetti. Aileen goes back to the car and comes back with a bottle of red wine. She peels off the wrapper from the top, and Gale passes her the two-handled bottle opener.

The table is already set with silver and wine glasses and china matching Gale's soup tureen and platter.

We sit and Aileen fills our glasses, and raises hers and says, "To our host, who is indeed our dear Friend."

Victor lifts his glass and responds, "To our lovely guests."

Mrs. Hale turns to me and asks, "And who do we have here?"

I tell her, "I was born in a house that used to be where yours is."

"And your name?"

"Lyle Glazier. My father was Dan Glazier's son, and my mother was Mertie Briggs."

"From the lovely old homestead just up the road from us, and at last I meet somebody from the Glaziers. Your grandfather's house must be one of the showplaces of North Leverett."

"Gramp says the cornerstone is marked 1774."

Aileen says, "I love those old farmhouses with central chimney and wagonshed ell, and cluster of outbuildings, -- big barn, sugar house, ice house, smoke house, and across the road a toolshed, and, I think, further on across from the sandbank there's another building."

"Yes, the blacksmith shop. When I was a boy, Gramp used to shoe his own horses. And Gramma's henhouse was across the wooden bridge on the south slope of the sandbank. She kept her flock of hens and sold eggs at Bourne's store."

Mrs. Hale asks, "And your grandfather...is that the Dan E. Glazier who owns the sawmill on the pond opposite North Leverett church and town hall?"

"Yes. That's Gramp."

"It must make you proud to be one of the old families. Oh, Gale, what a lovely sauce. And your spaghetti! Fit for the Gods! And what lovely china."

She asks Gale if he will help with the annual garden club benefit for the church the way he did last year, and they embark on a long catalogue of families who contributed and need to be consulted again.

The wine begins to get to me and I drift away into reverie about Skip and our plans for the journey. After our visit in Paxton, he sent me an itinerary, and when I thanked him I added a postscript. I'm not sure whether I added it impulsively or deliberately.

"I woke up in the night, Skip, and you were pushed up against me and I felt your erection. When I pulled away from you, you turned your back and settled into your deep sleep."

He wrote back, "I was dimly aware of what you wrote about, Little Lyle, but you needn't be afraid of me."

I wasn't afraid of him. It was the first time he called me "Little Lyle," and I liked it, but I didn't write back to say so.

I come out of my drowsy flashback to hear Victor saying, "It is a lovely tureen, and if you like it, I'm sure Gale will be happy to sell it."

"Oh, Victor! How can you think I would sell my tureen?"

Mrs. Hale said, "I was only admiring. I never dreamed of buying it."

"I couldn't sell any of my china."

"Gale, it's time you realized you have to stop living in a dream world. How are you going to survive this coming winter?"

"Dear Gale, dear Friend, I never intended to imply I am trying to buy your tureen."

"I'm serious, Gloria. Make him an offer."

"Oh, Victor, how can you!"

"Gloria, he's living in never never land. He hasn't a red cent, not a pot to piss in. He ought to welcome an offer from anybody. Gale, this is a perfectly good chance, and you ought to jump at it. Tell her how much you will take for your soup tureen."

"Now, I'm going to put an end to this. I haven't offered to buy anything. I think it brutal to suggest it."

Gloria and Aileen start clearing the table and carrying soiled dishes into the kitchen and Gale joins them. Victor puts out his hand and holds me from joining them.

"Lyle, you may have known Gale from a long time, but not so long as I have. I knew him when he was somebody, before he married Irene. She pretended he was the father of her baby, and she simply stripped him of everything. He escaped from her and came up here to get away. But she took everything. As you see, he never had money to finish this house. I'm the only friend who stood by him.

"I'm his friend, Lyle, not his lover. I like you, Lyle. I want you to stay with me tonight. I'm not in love with you, but I like you. I want you to sleep with me. Gale has told me

about you, but he is just an old-maid hasbeen. And I'm a young man. You sleep with me."

I carry the wine glasses out into the kitchen. Aileen is giving Gale a hug and saying, "We don't like your fat friend."

Gale says, "Sell my soup tureen for twenty-five dollars! Victor is my oldest friend and he would sell my beautiful soup tureen."

The ladies and Gale have finished the dishes and gone out to the car, where I can hear them saying Goodnight and Gale comes in but not into the diningroom. I hear him going upstairs.

I'm sitting at the table and Victor is saying, "Come along up with me." He keeps talking, and I go with him. We strip and get into bed. He mumbles, "I'll suck you and fuck you and give you a loving you have never had in your life." He goes to sleep like a stuck hog. I lie there, and drop off to sleep.

Along in the night I get up and find my way along to Gale's room and crawl in with him, and he turns toward me and embraces me and we have sex. Then he goes back to sleep. I go back to Victor's room where my clothes are, and I crawl in on my side of the bed, and go to sleep. At daybreak I get up and dress and go downhill past the Towne's and past the other houses, and down the road to Gramp's.

I go in through the woodshed and upstairs and get into my own bed, and sleep until I hear Gramp stirring in the little chamber, and out in the kitchen puggling the fire. Then Mrs. Swet is getting up and I pull myself out of bed, and have breakfast with them. When Uncle Perry comes down we go out to the barn and hitch up the horse and are down in the meadow below the coal kilns and load the thin crop along the river bank. I am dragging the bullrake. Then -- up in the far haymow, with Gramp pitching off, and Uncle Perry pitching up to me, I'm mowing away in the ell over the closed-in barnyard, east of the cowshed.

Amy writes inviting me to come for a week. Gramp and Uncle Perry have finished with haying, so I get in the car and drive to Bennington. Instead of waiting for somebody to carry me, or to hitch hike, I can jump in my car and go places. When I get to Greenfield, instead of going on the Mohawk Trail, I find a shortcut out past the jail and over side streets to a woods road cutting along a stream to the Colrain road leading to Jacksonville and Wilmington. I have probably saved three miles, besides having the pleasure Gramp used to have of taking a back road instead of sticking to the main drag. That few miles through the woods is the best stretch I travel.

Amy is waiting in the dooryard, puttering around flowerbeds and keeping an eye out for me. I'm just in time for supper. Olive has gone somewhere with George Elwell. I help Amy with dishes and invite her to take a spin in my car.

As I'm sitting in the driveway, engine idling, I can hear her and her father in the kitchen. Their voices rise higher. I can't hear most of what they're saying, but his crusty rumble comes out to me, and her voice in reply. I gather he is objecting to something. She is laying him out in lavender. I never in my life spoke to Pop in that tone. The door slams and she comes down the walk. I'm sitting there dazed. I'm tempted to go in and get my bag and clear out of this hornet's nest. Amy goes around back of the car and gets in without saying a word. We sit there in silence. Then I turn the ignition on, put the engine into reverse and back onto the roadway. Without a word from either of us, we drive through the evening to the main road on the east side of town. I follow the highway I know -- through Woodford back over the road I came, up Woodford Mountain, past the collection of houses at the top and into the Green Mountain Forest. I pull to the side of the road, and she is still sitting there staring ahead, not saying a word. I reach over to her, pull her into my shoulder. She's not saying a word, not

crying but little hiccups. When I kiss her, her cheek is wet. We don't talk, just sit there, and I'm kissing her.

A car comes from behind and pulls up beside us. A trooper. Without getting out, he leans over turns down the window on the passenger side, and says, "You're making it difficult for me. If you want to do that, get off the highway onto one of the side roads."

Considering what we are not doing, it strikes me funny. I start the engine, pull into a road leading into the National Forest, and we park there for an hour and half, saying very little. It's a turning point as if we have passed a milepost.

The next morning I'm up early for family breakfast, and walk out with Walter, find a hoe and go into the cornfield with him and Levi Perham. Nobody says much. I wonder if Walter is surprised to find I'm an old field hand. I have no trouble keeping up with them. We work hard all morning.

I spent the better part of the week there hoeing corn, weeding flower beds, and one time we went over into the east pasture to pick blueberries. Between us we managed so well that Amy decided to make a deep dish blueberry pie, but her mother caught on and wouldn't allow it because the hired man wouldn't like it.

-3-

When I got back to Gramp's, a letter from Arthur Bowditch was waiting for me. Arthur wanted me to come down to Thompsonville and pick him up and bring him back for a weekend. He seemed to take it for granted I would. He wanted me to come Friday late afternoon and it was already Thursday.

I asked Mrs. Swet if it would be all right if I had a student for guest Saturday for breakfast and lunch and Sunday breakfast, but not Sunday noon. She said, "Yes, I can manage."

I asked Gramp if it was all right with him, and he said, "If Mrs. Swet can manage," and I told him I had already spoken to her.

Friday afternoon is beautiful and I enjoy the drive through Amherst and Hadley and Whately past Northampton, then on the west side of the Connecticut with Mount Tom across the river. I have already driven in Boston, so Springfield doesn't scare me. I have to cross over to Thompsonville, where Bowditch is sitting on his front stoop waiting for me, a bundle at his side.

I ask, "Did you bring your bathing suit?" and he says, "Yes."

I ask, "What would you have done if I hadn't showed up?" and he said, "I knew you would."

We stop above Holyoke for sandwiches, root beer, and ice cream cones. It's still light when we get to North Leverett. Past Gramp's mill I cross the river, take a quick left uphill onto Hemenway Road, then right past the Hemenway place and past Uncle Perry's and over toward the swimming hole below Bournes's dam. I take the jog up to the high road then turn quick left at the bottom of Rattlesnake Gutter. Arthur is intrigued with the name. He wants to know if there are any rattlesnakes.

I say, "I never saw any."

We park off the road in the trees, and take the path through the woods, and I'm glad nobody else is in swimming. We watch each other undress. I assume he wants to have sex with me, but we are careful and don't go in naked.

I say, "Somebody is always coming here."

But nobody comes.

It's not quite dark by the time we get back to Gramp's. Nobody is up. We go in through the woodshed into the back kitchen, and through the inch-thick kitchen door, and up the crooked stairs to my bedroom. We start undressing without pulling the chain of the overhead bulb. When we are bare, I reach over and pull him into my arms and give him the long kiss I am sure he was after that night in Lewiston, when I couldn't have anything to do with him because he was my student. It seems to be what he is waiting for. He is a little fellow, very

feminine, and lets himself go limp against me. After a while, I reach down with my free hand and gently touch his breast, moving my palm across his nipple which comes up stiff. When I let my hand slide lower, he is already erect. I touch him gently. It's as if his cock is alive and pushing itself towards me. Then I pull him to the bed where we lie together. At first he's entirely passive but when I put his hand on my cock, he begins to rub, and we are playing with each other. It's the gentlest sex I have had with anybody. I really like it because I can feel how much he likes it.

I whisper, "First time?"

And he whispers back, "Yes."

After breakfast I show him the farm, and after lunch we go for another swim. Then I ask if he would like to see Mount Hermon where I used to teach, and he wants to.

We have a light supper in Turners Falls, then cross the river north through Gill to campus. We drive around on the school roads, and I show him the second floor window where I used to be housemaster. He wants to know how I could leave here.

"It's heavenly."

I say, "I wanted to teach poetry."

He says, "What I want is to go with you on your trip."

"That's impossible. My friend Skip Henryson is going back to the west coast to see his family and friends he hasn't seen in three years. He'll be a senior at Tufts next year."

We don't get out of the car. It's a clear night and we have the top down. It's beautiful looking across the valley to where I used to live. I tell him a little of my story.

He says, "I want to go with you."

We go over the River to Northfield, and then down on the east side to the Farms and on to Millers Falls. I'm driving with my left hand and he's snuggled against my shoulder. Somehow I don't have any fear even if people see us, but we don't see many

people. I know I wouldn't be able to live with him, yet it's very fulfilling to ride with him like this through the night under the stars. I feel like singing, but I don't.

Back at Gramp's it's like last night. Gramp and Mrs. Swet are in bed. We undress in the dark. I'm glad my bedroom is on the south east side not above Mrs. Swet's northwest bedroom or above Gramp, who has taken over the little chamber.

After a late breakfast, I drive him back to Thompsonville. It's a happy/sad farewell, as if we both know it will never be like this again between us.

-4-

Bill Swet is visiting his mother for a weekend. He's sleeping in her room, I suppose on a cot. I haven't seen him since we sang together in the Glee Club. Saturday afternoon he is idling around the yard, and I invite him for a swim in the pool in the woods down from Bourne's dam.

We drive over in my car, and after our swim I say, "I want you to see this fabulous house with a view over onto Brushy Mountain above us. That's where my folks first came in 1790 to cut virgin timber for the first sawmill at the foot of the mountain. My grandmother Briggs married a woodcutter whose parents lived in a house just below where the new house has been built. Gale is always talking about my great grandparents, the Briggses. They died long before Gale ever thought of coming here, but he likes to talk about his connection to the old families."

Gale is out on his patio, sprawled in a folding chair. We wake him when we arrive.

He is so glad to have company. "Isn't the weather dreadful? Not just the heat, but the humidity. I'm drenched."

I say, "We just came from the pool below Bournes' dam."

"Isn't it delicious? That icy water is so refreshing. Let me run in for three beers."

Bill is admiring the low-hung house with its magnificent view far beyond Brushy Mountain and Mount Toby all the way to the thin line of the firetower on Mount Greylock. I point out the two close to us. "They call them mountains but they're both 15 hundred feet."

Bill says, "I used to live in Pittsfield. I know Greylock. They say it's the highest peak in Massachusetts."

Gale comes back with three bottles and three glasses. "I don't have any ice. They're piss warm, but the best I can do. How long will you be here, Mr. Swet?"

"I have to go back tomorrow."

"Pity. You would love to meet Amos Pinkerton. He's visiting next weekend. Lyle, he'll arrive with a trunkful of goodies and you've got to come for dinner-- caviar and avocado and tinned salmon. He'll be driving his new Alvis. It's so low built, it practically drags on the ground. I told him he'll knock the eyes out of the yokels. I expect Victor back before then with his student he's gone to get. And Rick Bistrek is coming over from Turners Falls. He's a New York policeman, and built! You never saw anybody like him. Like a brick shithouse!"

We have to be getting on because Bill's mother is expecting us for dinner.

Gale reminds me, "Be sure to come for dinner, Friday, Lyle. It will be fabulous!"

On the drive back I say, "Gale is obvious, but never hurt anybody. They say he was married and has a son nobody has ever seen."

-5-

Friday afternoon I'm at Gale's on the patio waiting for a sight of the Alvis. We hear a motor grinding up Dudleyville Road, then taking the turn back toward us.

"It's Amos! Quick, Lyle!"

He propels me to the livingroom to his out-of-tune grand piano and I'm playing the first chords of Schubert's Marche

Militaire, when the front door bursts open on a tornado of sound. I have my back turned, but Gale is rushing away.

"Amos!"

"Get that country cownturd away from his miserable cacaphony!"

I turn to face a four and half foot midget who is stamping his foot in fury. Behind him is a medium-sized young man with a traveling case in each hand.

Amos pushes aside Gale's extended hand. "Get that country bumpkin out! I don't want to see his sniveling face again!"

Through the open door I can see a towtruck with the long hood of a lowhung foreign car cut off by the doorjamb.

Amos's young man puts down the baggage. He explains, "We broke down and had to hire a towtruck."

"Shut up, Harris, I'll call you when I need you."

Standing in the doorway, the grease-stained mechanic is grinning. "If you'll unload it, I'll tow it back to Montague and work on it, and have it ready for you in a jiffy -- tomorrow afternoon at the latest."

"I want it tomorrow morning."

"Depending on where I have to go for parts. When your undercarriage hit the rock, you did considerable damage."

We go outside. Behind the two bucket seats of the phaeton, the tonneau is piled high with suitcases and boxes. Harris and I set to and get busy unloading and carrying boxes into the kitchen and suitcases upstairs to the guest room. I don't say anything, simply help wherever needed.

Gale ushers Amos onto the patio and fetches a beer.

While Harris and I are working and the mechanic is lolling against the side of the truck watching, Victor Bornstein drives into the dooryard with his student. They cluck over the wrecked Alvis, then Victor goes where Amos is -- on the patio, and the student pitches in and helps with the unpacking. He introduces himself. Walter is a cleancut kid and I wonder how he can

possibly stand it with Victor. You might say the same about Harris: what can he possibly see in Amos? I suppose money may be the answer.

The dinner promises to be famous if you like pate de fois gras, caviar, anchovies, black olives, and baked stuffed grouse. Gale as impresario of the kitchen is purring. Except for Victor and Amos and Rick Bistrek, the policeman from Turners Falls, who are on the patio, we are all helping with dinner. Gale sends me over to the Bourneses to have a bucket of ice delivered from their ice house. In a few minutes the two Bournes boys come over with a milkpail full of chunks all sizes and shapes. The boys are eyeing the guests on the patio and the kitchen full of food and all of us hurrying around baking and frying and cutting up vegetables. They shuffle in with their water pail and dawdle at the kitchen door, then suddenly, as if pursued by dragons, take off down the driveway, chasing each other home.

After supper, when Harris and Walter and I have washed and dried the dishes, I decide I have had enough of it. I walk out onto the patio. At first I don't see anybody, then I come onto Rick Bistrek slouched in a wicker chair, his long legs propped over the chair arms. Amos is across his lap, busy with his little fingers working Rick's cock inside his dungarees. Although the fly is gapped open, Amos is absorbed in stroking from the outside. Rick is leaning back eyes closed. A patch of wetness is gathering under the cloth. I have just an eyeflick as I pass by. I am over the edge of the patio onto the path downhill to the Towne Place and a few minutes later by late sundown am stealing in through the woodshed and back in bed at Gramp's.

The next afternoon I'm at the swimming hole taking a dip when the whole crowd come through the woods. They fling off their clothes shouting like a bunch of grammar school kids. Victor yells at me, "Lyle, you missed out. We fucked and sucked

-- a perfect orgy! Anybody who had any doubts before didn't have any by morning."

Gale was saying, "In this cold water I come up hard as a pinball."

Rick and Walter are over at the edge of the pool splashing each other. Amos has found a small turtle and is trying to pry him out of his shell. I dry myself and start up the bank. Harris follows. So far as I can see, Amos hasn't paid any attention to him since they arrived. We sit under a tree looking down on a path leading from above the dam to the coal kilns. The crowd at the pool seem far away. Harris talks about his life in a small upstate New York town before he came to New York City, and I talk about my teaching at Bates. After a while we are masturbating each other. I look down on the path and Mr. Bourne is walking along looking at us. I pull my clothes together. Harris hasn't seen Mr. Bourne, who walks along the path absentmindedly as if he hasn't seen us. After he goes out of sight, Harris and I finish each other off. Harris and I shake hands. He starts back to the pool and I'm going toward the Corner. I'm carrying towel and wet bathing suit and wearing my Middlebury M sweater with sleeves tied under my chin and the body flung over my back. I start whistling as I walk into the clear in plain sight of the coal kilns. I turn up toward Moores Corner store, and spy Uncle Henry Blinn hoeing in his vegetable garden between the back road and the main road. Instead of passing on up the road, I walk over to him and we talk together as if I have just come from taking a swim by myself. I don't care if Mr. Bourne saw me. I don't care who sees me. It is as if by walking in the open like this I don't have anything to hide from anybody.

-6-

I have had a letter from Amy asking me to come back one more time before going on my trip. I decide to. I have the Chevrolet parked at the side of the road beside the path leading

into the woods and have just taken my dip and am on the way back when I meet Rick and Walter on the path. I wish they had come earlier.

Walter says, "Amos and Harris finally got the car fixed and are on the road to New York."

Rick says, "Come on back and take a dip with us."

"I'm just leaving for Vermont to see Amy."

"Oh, come on back, it won't take but a minute."

I'd like to but don't have time to. "I've got to get on the road to Bennington."

Rick says, "Lyle, you're making a big mistake. You'll regret it the rest of your life. We really want you to come back with us."

"I've really got to be going."

They stand aside and let me past.

I say, "Well, goodbye then."

"Goodbye."

"Goodbye, Lyle."

At the noon table, Mrs. Niles asks Walter if he's going to keep his word and mow the side lawn, and he grunts, "The corn is getting away from me."

Somebody has brought the lawn mower onto the strip of lawn on the east side. I go into the pighouse storage shed and look around and find an oilcan, oil the gears, and go to work on the big piece west of the house. I have got most of it done, when Mrs. Niles puffs around the corner and takes a look. She says, "Well!" And then, when I stop for a minute, "You're so good at it, I wonder if you would weed my flower beds? I can't get down to it."

So I put in most of the afternoon there.

Around three-thirty Amy comes out with two glasses and a pitcher of switchel with maple sweetening, and we sit in the shadow of a young black walnut tree that is being twisted to the

north from two poplars, towering beside the road along the west lawn.

Amy says, "When I was four years old I could jump over those poplars."

When I finish the bed of iris and sweet william, I go in and wash up, and we walk over west to Middle Pownal Road and plunge into deep clover. In an indentation out of sight from the road we lie down listening to the tumult of bobolinks and the distant whistle of redwinged blackbirds. I put out my arm and Amy snuggles against me.

After a while, she says, "Lyle." and I say, "Yes?" and she says, "Can we take off our clothes?"

I say, "I'm all sweaty. I need a bath."

And she says, "That doesn't matter."

Turning my back, I strip. When I turn to face her it's the first time in broad daylight I've been face to face with a naked woman. Her breasts are small and tight. I let my eyes shift to the neat brown patch slightly curly between her legs. Compared to a boy, there is hardly anything.

She's studying me.

She says, "What do you call him?"

I say, "What?"

And she says, "He's like a little man. Do you have a name for him?"

I've never thought of myself that way. I say, "Johnny."

She says, "When I was about eight, we had a visit from two little boys. Mother's cousin Roy Stafford and Aunt Julia had been missionaries in China. We went on a picnic down to Sand Springs this side of Williamstown, and the older one Bill and I went into the bushes to relieve ourselves, and it's the first time I ever saw a boy. I thought it a handy gadget to take on a picnic."

We were both laughing. We pulled on our clothes and walked back toward the farm. On the way Amy tells me that the big

event for the weekend is that tomorrow night Everett Lillie, their chief hired hand, will give a clambake in the hillside just up from the brook towards the sugar house. She and Olive worship Everett. When they were little, he lived upstairs over the back kitchen in one of two tiny rooms across the hall from what is Amy's room in the new part of the house.

Amy told me, "When I was expected, Grampa Stafford said if the family was going to increase that fast, they had to have more room. So they tore down the old ell on the north side, and put rollers under the tenant house across the road and joined it to the original saltbox. The floorboards on both floors fit so perfectly you'd never know they hadn'd been there forever.

"When Everett came back from the War, he had learned to be an engineer. He can fix just about anything."

-7-

I was flattered when Everett invited me to go with him to prepare the clambake. He dug a hole six or eight feet deep and lined it with charcoal and straw. On the first level he put a few bushel of sweetcorn on the cob. More straw on top, then a layer of clams, a couple of pecks of them.

"When the heat down below gets real hot along toward the end, we'll lay on a grill for hamburgers and hot dogs. The ladies will provide pickles and buttered rolls and frosted cake. And we always have at least five gallons of ice cold switchel. And bottled rootbeer."

Half the neighborhood is invited -- The Thompsons, the Lillies, the Barbers and Wllcoxes, and Nellie Robinson, and the Weller girls, Edith and Dorothy and Mable. And of course George Elwell and his sister. And Walter has invited Ben Amidon, Leon Eldred and his wife and Superintendent Irons. And Mrs. Niles has invited the Bratton sisters, Edith and Belle, and Ruth and Anne Mason and Dan, more names than I can remember in a month of Sundays. Amy introduces me to everybody.

Three hours before sunset after the heat of that July Sunday we gather in the pasture. Horse blankets are spread and laprobes and wornout overcoats with moths flying out of them. After we stuff ourseves, there are few dishes to wash. We burn paper plates on the coals, and every housewife goes to the brook to rinse out her salad dish and carry back to wash it at home.

Threshing oats is scratchy, ear-deafening business. Everett Lillie operates the awkward machine separating chaff from grain. The grain drops into a bag propped widemouthed beneath a chute and the chaff runs over a treadway leading to a chopper and a blower that blows it into a mow over the horsestalls. I'm one of the treaders with pitchfork or openfaced shovel pushing the chaff into corners and treading it down. You get chaff down your neck, where it sticks to skin like a leech. The noise of the threshing machine makes it impossible to talk to fellow treaders unless you raise your voice to a pitch where nobody hears what you say. Outside the open door of the second floor mow, the clatter and bang of the machine and the whine of the engine are enough to bust ear drums. Yet, compared to work in Millers Falls Tool Company it is good clean work, without grease or dust from castings, and you have freedom to tramp kneedeep in chaff to the milkpail in the corner and, grabbing the long-handled dipper, douse your head or rinse your mouth with lukewarm water from the scrubbed and shining pail. That is, providing you had the foresight to fill the pail and tote it onto the landing outside the upstairs mow.

At the kitchen table, lengthened by two leaves, and presid-ed over by Amy and Olive as waitresses and Mrs. Niles as cook, lunch is competitive. Threshers move from farm to farm, where every housewife and her daughters try to outdo neighbors. Olive, especially, is a great flirt with the young fieldhands, and even Walter and Henry Thompson, who own the machine and boss

the threshing, are relaxed enough to chaff the young men on where they hung out last night.

Nobody knows me well enough to include me in the chaffing, except a wink from Everett, and a dig from Andrew Crosier on the black straw hat I borrowed from Amy to keep the sun out of my eyes when loading oat sheaves onto high-walled farm wagons fetching grain from the field.

After supper, it is taken for granted that Amy and I have the southeast sitting room for bundling on the horsehide loveseat against the wall between sitting room and sewing room. The padded back, rounded seat and cramped arms of the clawfooted loveseat provide a sufficiently restricted space to guarantee our being thrown together, but neither of us overcomes shyness enough to unfasten each other's clothes. Around 11:30 or twelve o'clock, we disentangle from our cramped engagement. Amy shakes herself to straighten her dress and creeps upstairs past Olive's room and on through the sealed room to her northwest bedroom, while I slip into the bathroom and then to my bed in the sewing room. It is taken for granted by everyone (willy/nilly by the old folks) that in good time we will be married.

-8-

Evelyn Towne has come home from New York City, where she is training to be a nurse. Aunt Ruth has cancer and is in Springfield Hospital, where the staff stretches their rules by allowing Evelyn the privilege of taking her turn caring for her mother.

She is a so much younger than I, I think of her as a sister. I drive up there to the Townes's and she and I go blueberrying. I have written to Miss Branch at Mount Holyoke and she has invited Evelyn and me for lunch with her and Miss Smith. We carry a basket of berries.

I know they will love Evelyn, and I'm not wrong in that, but it seems to me that although Miss Branch is my same good friend she has always been, Miss Smith is not quite herself.

She seems cold toward me. We don't make a long lunch of it. We talk about Aunt Ruth and a bit about Bread Loaf, rather awkwardly for we all know they are disappointed not to be there this summer, and, although I hardly give it a thought, there is way back in my mind some question how I could have got a B in her course, when everybody in the class assumed I was guaranteed an A like the first year. There is just that touch of stiffness with Miss Smith, which lessens a bit when she asks if I have kept in touch with Cecil Denton, and I have to admit I haven't.

Miss Branch says, "Lord Cecil, he was my friend even before we met. He wrote me before he came for his first year that he had heard about my course and wanted to take it. What an eloquent voice. I used to tell him he should be an actor, but so far as I know he never tried out for a play at Bread Loaf. Did you know him well, Lyle?"

"Very well. I met him my first year. In fact, he was taking your course, and recommended I take it, and that is how I got to take your course and took it again. It was a great course."

"He always spoke of you approvingly."

"Last year he borrowed my Milton book for Professor Davidson's course, and this year he has my two-volume Plato. I have to get it back when I go there next week to pick up Skip Henryson."

"Skip Henryson. I wonder if I know him?"

Miss Smith says, "He is that young cousin of John Farrar."

Miss Branch: "Oh, is he?" Then, to me, "John is an old, old friend of ours. He was one of the founders of the summer school. He and I used to camp the Long Trail before I had to stop. Tell us, Evelyn, how long have you known this young scamp?"

"As long as I can remember. Lyle's mother was my mother's older sister."

"Lyle told me over the phone that you are going to Springfield to visit your mother."

"I'm a trained nurse. I keep my uniform at the hospital. Lyle is driving me back to stay another week. They give me permission to nurse my mother."

"How lovely for you both. And, Lyle, how lovely of you and Evelyn to have brought us those beautiful berries. I've asked the hostess to serve them as a special treat. Fresh from the wilds. How often I have gone into the woods to pick blueberries."

The waitress comes to clear dishes from our entree and passes around dessert menus, which Miss Branch immediately collects and returns. "Thank you, Emmeline, but we are having a special treat. We are having blueberries that our guests picked for us this morning."

Emmeline blushes and scrambles to put away the menus. "Oh, I'm so sorry!"

"Not sorry at all. What a lovely privilege. And, Lyle, when do you leave for the coast?"

"Later this week. I'm picking up Skip at Bread Loaf and we go across the Ticonderoga Bridge and across northern New York to stay overnight with Skip's grandfather in Norwood, near Ogdensburg. Then the next day we cross over into Ontario to Ottawa and will stay that night in Toronto, on our way to Chicago."

"How lovely that you two youngsters can have such a journey. And next fall you will be back at Bates. Please give our love to Lord Cecil when you see him."

Nobody mentions noticing that on the dessert menu the specialty in all caps was FRESH FIELD BLUEBERRIES.

On the way from South Hadley to Springfield, Evelyn says, "Lyle, your Aunt Helen is talking about you. She says college has spoiled you."

I don't say anything to defend myself. I go in with her to see Aunt Ruth, who is awfully sick.

In the morning after breakfast I say goodbye to Mrs. Swet. Gramp comes out with me to the car. I have packed everything ready for the trip. When I'm saying goodbye, he clears his throat and says, "Lyle, I'm going to have to charge you something for board and room."

I take out my pocketbook and ask, "How much do I owe you?"

He says, "Well, I guess I'll have to pay something to Mrs. Swet for taking care of you."

I say, "How much?"

He says, "I guess sixty dollars will about do it."

I pay him. With what I have sent Middlebury for Larry, it leaves me sixty-five for my trip.

At the last minute, I drive to Middlebury by Bennington, and stay overnight two nights. I get there at lunch time. The house is in an uproar because they have just had a three day visit from important relatives of Mrs. Niles. Ralph Harwood is Chairman of the Religion Department at Smith College. His wife is the daughter of a Stafford, brother of Amy's grandfather. They have two daughters who didn't come, but they brought two boys, one a teenager and the other nine.

The boys know nothing about farming, and the older was especially offensive to Levi Perham, who almost never raises his voice at the table, but this time he can't contain himself,

"That boy don't know nuthin. He ast me what a bull does. He don't even know natur."

I take a hoe and go into the field where Levi and Walter are still hoeing corn. Levi is so mad about the boys, he has to take it out on somebody, and he knows I'm a college professor, so he challenges me to a race to see who can hoe a row faster. He is so slow I walk between two rows and secretly reach over and hoe the second one as we go along. We finish the row a dead

heat, and Levi boasts about having bested me by a foot and a half. I don't say a word about having done two rows to his one.

Amy has bought a new Chevrolet coupe from Eddington, their family dealer. From way back they have always bought Chevrolets.

She had no trouble getting a Vermont license, using the family car that she learned on.

"But I wanted a New York license if I'm going back to LeRoy, so the garage sent a young mechanic with me to Albany. He didn't want to take our old touring car, and insisted on a brand new late model, and I got in the middle of State Street, going up that steep hill, and the examiner had me stop and start in traffic, and I stalled the engine. I had cars lined up behind me all the way back to the stoplight at the foot of the hill. I started and stalled and started and stalled, and finally got so mad I opened my door, and walked around the front to the passenger side and said, 'You drive it.' He had to shove over and take my place, and I didn't get the license. It tickled the mechanic. He drove us back here, every once in a while giggling so hard under his breath all the way home it shook the steering wheel. He didn't decrease my temperature.

"When Mr. Eddington heard about it, next day he had me come back and try out his family car, and we drove back to Albany and he talked to the chief examiner, who took me out on side streets all on the level, and I passed without any more trouble."

BOOK II.17WICKED...and Spotless as the Lamb

Trip West '38 Chapter Seventeen

-1-

At Bread Loaf in mid morning, I stop at the Inn desk and ask for Cecil Denton. He has left my two-volume Plato with a note: "Sorry not to be able to thank you in person. Love, Denny."

Skip is angry with Harry Owen: "He put me in charge of tennis courts. Then when I spent hours working to keep them tiptop, he ordered me not to play. I was monopolizing the courts. That's my thanks for keeping them in better condition than they ever have been before."

I help load his luggage. He's driving. When we come to Port Henry on the other side of the lake, I remind him that is where Harry Owen comes from. He stops the car at a phone booth and calls Harry at home and comes back to say Harry has invited us to stop for a minute. He lives in a brick house with beautiful grounds. In a week he's off for six weeks in northern Italy, chiefly Florence and Siena. He tells us there's no quick way across north central New York. We have to go to Plattsburgh and turn west.

It's a long way to Norwood where Bomps lives with his second wife. Though we go to bed early, we sleep late and have a slow breakfast. Skip wants to see Ottawa, so we cross over the St. Lawrence and go north. It's a Capital city, all government buildings and gardens, very clean, but nothing interesting except you can say, "I've been to Ottawa."

We have a sandwich and coffee at a roadside stop and stay overnight on the east side of Toronto without going into the city. In the morning we have toast and coffee and the worst artificial orange juice I ever had anywhere, bitter -- hardly at all sweet. We go through miles of streets of small houses all

the same size. Early morning light spills on flat, uninteresting suburbs that we're glad to leave behind.

At Windsor we cross over to Detroit and get on the road to Chicago, much better roads than in Canada.

-2-

In Chicago we stay with Uncle Fred Randall who's on the Board of Directors of the Northern Pacific Railroad. He and his wife have an immaculate apartment high in a skyscraper overlooking Lakeside Drive. Their maid is concerned that we get enough to eat. I can't make out whether Mr. Randall is a real Uncle or whether he's adopted. He tells Skip his father and mother are - "salt of the earth."

We stay over one day. For lunch Uncle Fred takes us to the Union League Club. As we go into a huge diningroom we pass a locomotive carved of ice. Its tender is loaded with oysters and clams in their shells and lobsters and crabs, their claws scrambling for some sort of purchase. You could pick out your own lobster.

For dessert Skip and I both ordered chocolate cake. The waiter comes with a tray in each hand. After laying them on two serving stands, he brings the first cake to Skip and has him cut a chunk. Then, instead of coming over to me, he puts that tray back on its stand and brings the other to me, and I cut my serving out of the second cake. What do they do back in the kitchen? Do the help get the cakes? Or do they splice them together and frost them over for another diner? .

After lunch we go to Wrigley's Field and have seats up front just to the right of the high backup fence behind the catcher. We are practically on top of the infield. It's my first time watching big league.

Here I am a Socialist, and I'm discovering how nice rich people can be. After breakfast, the maid has packed lunch for us, enough to last for on the road and dinner in the small cabin west of Chicago where we put up for the night. When we

are by ourselves, Skip calls me "Little Lyle" and just for the fun of it, I start calling him "Henry" from his last name. I like the way we have private names for each other. Sometime when he calls me "Little Lyle," I call him "Hen."

We are driving five or six hundred miles a day and staying in cheap cabins Mumsie and Skip picked out from travel agency fliers. We drive with the top down, and by afternoon in this perfect weather the steady pace of fifty to sixty miles an hour, combined with direct afternoon sun wears us down. The second night west of Chicago Skip has a sick headache. After we get settled and go to a diner, he can't get down anything but a glass of water. He shoves over his ham sandwich, and I eat it.

Back at the room, he undresses and rolls into bed. It's still an hour at least before sunset. I feel terrible. I can't think of anything to do for him. I go outside and walk out of the small town into the rolling prairie. When I turn around to look back I'm in a gully. In a panic I run to the top of the slope. Way back there I can see the little town and our cabins barely visible. A fat, sloppy, short-legged houn'dog has followed me. I lie down and he comes to me and starts whining. He's climbing on my leg and works at me the way Shep did back when I was a boy. He's pumping me and nosing at my fly. When I take out my cock, he starts lapping, and I reach down and grab hold of his pecker and immediately push the skin all the way back and reveal the engorged red knob at the base. He's going crazy and I'm going crazy with built-up sexual frustration. In a frenzy we go off together. I look down at the panting, eager animal and try to feel sympathy for him, but he is not even lovable as a dog. I stand up in our gully and look around. In all that wasteland of prairie, there's not a person in sight, nobody nearer than the handful of houses a half mile away, stretched on both sides of the highway -- a church steeple, a gaspump, a diner, a grocery, a farm supply outfit, and the

cluster of tree-shaded cabins where our car and one other are parked.

I start running toward it. When I get back to our cabin, I look in and Skip is just lying there. I go over to the diner/grocery and buy a half dozen oranges, and come back and squeeze three, spooning out the seeds.

I go over to the bed, and slip my arm under Skip's head and prop him up. "Try this." He drains the glass and flops back and seems to go to sleep. I take the squeezer and tumbler and spoon over to the diner and rinse them at the sink in the john.

It's dark. I undress and crawl in on my side of the bed. Our trip seems to be falling apart. It's a long way ahead to Seattle. I drop into a restless sleep, and wake up to find Skip hugging me. He wastes no time on foreplay but reaches for my sex -- with his hand then with his mouth. I lie there disbelieving, then squirm around and place my lips around the cope of his cock and feel the foreskin peel back as he plunges to the hilt. I feel an enormous expansion inside my throat and yield myself to him and feel myself coming as he comes. Afterward we go out around back of the cabin and piss in the sand.

-3-

Our trip has taken a new turn. We have become "buddies" -- Skip's word for it. I let him take the initiative. After our day's travel and makeshift dinner, we have long, fulfilling, selfishly selfless sex. Skip says we are both "high-sexed." Beyond his definition, we don't talk about it, simply give ourselves to each other. I know that I love him in a way he will never love me, because I think my love is forever and his is for our moment together. For the moment he is wholly for me as I am wholly for him.

I think he's looking forward to Cody, Wyoming, where he expects to have a letter from Dottie. I have left the same post office address with Amy, but unlike him I am having already what

I hoped for but never expected to have. We are no longer roughhousing. After we go to bed Skip simply turns and accepts me, and with his lips explores me and I explore him.

We have reached the maze of highways in the Black Hills of South Dakota and stop to watch the crew of Gutzon Borglum chip at the granite. The faces of Washington and Jefferson are already freed from the stone. Masons are working on Lincoln's beard, while in a deep recess in the background the lips only of Teddy Roosevelt pout from the cliffside. We hear a rumor that today the great sculptor himself is working with his crew. I think that the whole idea of the monument is fully in Borglum's mind. He knows already what it will look like when it is done.

Winding our way through dry canyons I discover that the Devil's Tower is not far ahead in Wyoming. Signs tell us it's only a few miles north of our route. Skip has never before heard the legend of the Indian girl pursued by a bear and crying for a miracle. The Great Spirit pitied her. The face of the earth erupted and uplifted her. The bear, trying with his claws to grasp, scratched deep grooves in the uprearing pillar. We take the side road north and in a short time are standing at the base of the massive core of an ancient volcano whose softer mass has been eaten away. A marker informs that it's 1,200 feet high, only 300 feet short of Brushy Mountain and Mount Toby.

Turning back, we have a long drive ahead to reach Cody by sunset. In the wide street of the city, direct sunlight is blinding my eyes. Traffic is heavy and lawless. It's only by accident we coast in to the right huddle of cabins. Before eating, we go in the john of the diner to wash off fine dust that hovered over the road and infiltrated our clothes and hair and penetrated into pores of our skin. Skip washes ahead of me. While I wait I notice a dispenser of condoms above the toilet, and when Skip has gone, put a quarter into the slot and push the lever. The small neat rubber packet comes into my hand accompa-

nied with a clatter from the machine like a giant cash register. When I open the door into the diner every face is turned my way.

I slip onto the empty stool beside Skip who gives me a withering look. I open my palm displaying my prize. He's not happy with my ingenuousness.

We have to wait until morning to pick up our mail from Amy and Dottie. Skip's message is disappointingly brief. Dottie will be "happy to see him." He must be sure to "drop by," as if the whole point of the trip was not planned around her. Amy's letter is longer. She reminds me that we'll be her guests in LeRoy when we return. She's helping her mother with canning beets and putting down pickles in brine. Olive and George have had a spat and he's been crying like a sissy. Olive seems to despise him, yet he hangs over her and tonight she's going out with him again. Amy's high school classmate Aldace Newton has dropped by and they walked around the square together. Aldace has had a nervous breakdown and is living near Fuller Road in a shack with kennels out in back, where he breeds Dalmatians.

It takes more than an hour to drive from Cody to Yellowstone. I'm astonished to find that the much advertised "gateway" is fifty miles east. We arrive just in time for Old Faithful to spout -- not one of its major eruptions so we wander around through the hotsprings and return in an hour for the next shoot, and this spout is tremendous. The welldressed man beside us mutters, "Jesus! What an ejaculation!" His wife sourly sends him in pursuit of their children.

Our next maildrop is Boise, Idaho. Nothing for Skip but I have another letter from Amy. Traveling north up a steep hill that goes on forever, we are drenched in a sudden downpour, and, soaked, scramble to get the top up and side curtains fastened. We travel for hours through the night before reaching our cabin, damp to the skin. The next day we're crossing Washington south of Spokane. Diminishing for miles on both sides of the road are wheatfields, golden in the sun, billowed by soft wind.

It's late evening when we reach Seattle. With Skip reading the map and shouting directions, I'm finding our way through the city westward to the Beach Drive suburb. This is where Mumsie is supposed to be waiting for us with the Rutherfords, family friends, Skip has been coaching me about C. A. Rutherford. An elderly financier, as a handsome young man, he was the first husband of Jessica Tandy. He has remarried late in life in order to have children. According to Skip, he is devoted to his young Scandinavian wife, Margaret, who has borne him two sons, Dickie and Bobbie. They were babies three years ago when Skip last saw them.

It's nearly eleven o'clock when we pull into a driveway slanting down to a two-car garage. The house is dark. Skip jumps out and hurries down the incline to ring the bell. For a long time there's no response. Then an upstairs window is pried open.

After a measured delay, a man's voice calls down, "Who's there?"

Skip comes back beside the car and looks up at the window, "It's Skip."

"Skip who?"

I have a sinking feeling we have got the wrong house.

A light goes on in an upstairs hall, and almost at the same time another light beside the front door.

You would have thought he had known us forever. He takes us into a billiard room and is gone for a few minutes then comes back with a fifth of scotch, a bottle of soda, and a miniature bucket of ice. He pours moderate helpings into squat tumblers of iridescent glass flaring from weighted bottoms. Like Uncle Fred Randall of Chicago he has enormous affection for Skip's father and mother and we hear again "Salt of the Earth." Margaret has just heard from Mumsie that she's unable to come to Seattle but will meet us at Aunt Edie Lockwood's hotel in Portland.

Tomorrow C. A. invites us into the city for lunch at his club. He gives us passes, and we can dine there whenever we're in the city. He asks if I play poker, and I say I've always wanted to learn, and he sets out to inform me of the rudiments. It's that game of chance I've read about in Stephen Crane and Bret Harte and Mark Twain, but we risk only pennies, of which C. A. has a boxful.

"I taught Margaret the week we were married and she's become quite a sharper, though she refuses to risk more than a penny."

It's nearly three o'clock when we go out to the car to get our luggage and pile in to bed, slogged with hours of driving and tanked up for a stiff bout of sex before the bottom drops out of our long first State-of-Washington day in this bungalow on the edge of Puget Sound.

-4-

We have a late breakfast with Margaret and Dickie and Bobbie wide eyed at the phenomenon of two boys who have traveled all the way from Maine and Massachusetts. Margaret is dark eyed, black haired and in love with her two sons and her husband. She agrees with Skip's plan to renew his familiarity with Seattle by giving me a tour of the city. We use our passes to have lunch in Mr. Rutherford's club, but we don't run into him. Skip's mind is on getting in touch with Dottie. She's not home when he calls there, but he tracks her down by phone at the recording studio. She's arranged for a reunion of close friends in the class of '35, which is not what he had in mind.

"She's tied up with rehearsals. She's sorry but Thursday night's the best she can do. They're getting ready for an important engagement. It's at a private club and I can't even be invited. And it won't be broadcast. Shit!"

-5-

Margaret takes up our slack by arranging a picnic on Mount Rainier. whose great hump dominates the landscape to the south-east. It's not shapely like Grand Tetons but a gigantic wart of nature -- as Skip boasts, "two and a half times as high as Mount Washington, which by comparison is only a foothill."

I defend my turf, "That's because Rainier's so much younger. The White Mountains and the Green Mountains are ancient, worn down by thousands more years of weathering."

We drive alongside the peak on the west, and approach from the south. I'm astonished how far we climb by car up the mountainside. When we park we're on a hump still only two thirds up. We overlook a valley flanked by a granite shoulder whose ravines are packed with glaciers pushing from the ice peak at the top.

I say, "All we have to do is go down this path and we are on a trail that will take us to the top in no time."

Skip says, "The last words of thousands who have been benighted at sunset. Some of them never come back."

We eat lunch at a picnic table overlooking that tremendous view. Far to the northwest a haze hangs over Seattle's Puget Sound. Tacoma is closer and clearer. The fingers of the Pacific grasp at the mainland as if to pick up a handful to hurl at the mountain.

-6-

When we get back to Beach Drive, the phone is ringing. Skip and I go to our room, and Margaret comes to find me: "You're to call Operator 345, she has a telegram for you."

It's from Greenfield, from Clayt: "Baby Donna born Thurs STOP Abby died Monday STOP Clayt" I ask the operator to repeat it and write it out. I go into the bedroom.

Skip asks, "Anything important?"

I don't say anything. I fling myself on my bed. He pries the paper from my fingers, and runs out of the room. I hear him

in the hall saying, "You come talk to him. He's very sensitive." He comes back with Margaret.

Margaret says, "Do you want to send a reply?"

I go to the phone and ask for Operator 345. He asks for the phone number, and I give it. Then I improvise. I feel a short message wouldn't be worthy of the occasion:

"Clayton Glazier STOP message received STOP Clayt come to live with me at Bates STOP you can live in my room STOP you will be my dependent the way Larry will be at Middlebury STOP you are the brightest boy in the family STOP come to live with me and go to Bates STOP see you in Northfield when I get home in three weeks STOP love STOP Lyle."

I don't want anything for supper. I stay in the room. I think I'm making a lot of trouble, but I don't know how to back out of it and go down to the table. Skip brings me dinner and dessert. I eat it without knowing what I'm eating. I think I must be sure to pay the Rutherfords for the telegram. It will cost a lot. I don't have that much money. I undress and go to bed, where Skip finds me later. It's strange how I have a numbness but I'm not sure I have all that grief. Skip undresses in the dark. After a while I go over to his bed and stay with him most all night.

-7-

The afternoon of Dottie's party I tell Skip he can have the car. Margaret says, "Good. I've made a chocolate cake. The boys and I will have one of you boys to enjoy it with us."

At the last minute, I change my clothes and go with Skip. It's a big house and a big party. Dottie is very nice and is being nice to Skip. There are a lot of their classmates as well as the leader of the band she sings with and some of the band members. I'm introduced to a lot of girls including Janie who is my girl for the evening. She's a not very tall chestnut haired girl, like Mary Priscilla, a natural mixer, in her third

year at the University of Washington. I dance with a lot of the girls but chiefly with her.

She asks, "What do you teach?"

"American Literature and freshman English. What's your major?"

"Organic Chemistry. I never was good in literature."

"I never was good in chemistry. In fact, I never had a course in it."

"I'm pre-med. Tell me what it's like to interpret poetry to a class of undergraduates. It must be a great challenge."

"I try not to tell them what they've read, but to encourage them to tell me."

"My freshman literature class was three hundred students -- straight lecture. Brilliant, but most of it over my head."

"Our classes are about twenty to twenty-five. Lots of discussion. I sometimes wonder if I'm teaching anything they don't already know."

"Do you write poetry?"

"Our teacher was a nationally known poet. Everybody considered him wonderful."

Skip is surrounded with men and women. I'm trying to make out how he's getting on with Dottie. It's too big a party to tell. He spends most of the evening dancing with Dottie. I'm introduced to her, but she pays little attention to me. Twice in the course of the evening, she sings a group of songs that sends the audience crazy, and I can see that Skip is crazy about her. When we break up, I take Janie home. I ask if she knew Skip in high school.

"Barely. There were over a thousand in our class. I got to know Dottie last year. You notice she has one of those husky voices. She's very much in demand."

At her house, I get out and open her door and walk with her to the porch. I'm in doubt whether I'm expected to kiss her, and when I do, am pleased she doesn't seem to expect anything more.

I was afraid I might not be able to find my way back to Dottie's, but I don't have any trouble. Her street and driveway are emptied of cars and there are lights only in the living room. I sit in the car, wondering if it would have been better if I had stayed back and had chocolate cake with Dickie and Bobbie and Margaret. In a short time, Skip and Dottie come to the door. She doesn't come down to the car with him. I move to the passenger side and let him drive home. He drives so fast I'm afraid a cop could stop us, but we make it safe to Beach Drive. Along toward morning he comes to my bed and we have furious sex.

Next day on the drive to Portland we take the coastroad. We can hear the roars of sea-lions, and several times stop to see the bulls roaring at each other. They actually don't make much contact. We watch a young bull trying to break in on an old bull and his harem. The young one is very aggressive but not successful. You can almost see he knows he's only practicing. He's overpowered by the whiskery jaws and powerful flippers and whaling tail of the old bull, who drives the young one skittering back. There is something sad in the realization that eventually one of those frisky lads will successfully take the place of the old fellow. We don't see it happen.

-8-

In Portland at Aunt Edie's hotel, I meet Mumsie. She's kind to me and thanks me for making it possible for Skip to come home. I take it she is working as a secretary to make it possible for Skip to stay in college. She has rich friends, but works hard for her living. Aunt Edie is a public school teacher. From her suite of livingroom and bedroom in an upper middle class hotel, I think she is much better paid than I am. We have dinner in the hotel diningroom. Like everywhere else in

our travels, I am being treated like a lord; nobody impresses on me any inkling they know I'm there only because of Skip.

Mumsie is particularly attentive. She discusses with Skip our trip to San Francisco:

"Auntie Cal is expecting us day after tomorrow, so we'll have two days on the road. You wanted to show Lyle the Bonneville Dam and Crater Lake."

"I want him to see the Columbia River valley. The Bonneville is just being opened. I haven't seen it myself."

"For tonight I've made reservations for two rooms in Klamath Falls this side of the border if we can make it from there to the Bay Area in one day."

Aunt Edie explains to me, "The problem with the dam is the salmon. They've made elaborate runs for them around the dam. The question is will the salmon make use of the sluiceways or try to plunge straight upriver over the dam?"

Skip says, "We can make it in two days. But I want Lyle to see Crater Lake. It's 2,000 feet deep."

"I read about it in my geology class at Middlebury. It's in the crater of an extinct volcano."

Mumsie says, "I think it's only a little way left of our route. I think we can make it."

-9-

In order to give me and Skip the view, Mumsie insists on riding in the middle over the brake and shifting gears. Skip drives up the river valley. Auntie Ed has packed lunch and a great basket of oranges, bananas, grapefruit and grapes to be delivered to Auntie Cal. We spend an hour and a half at Bonneville, but don't see any salmon. There is still work to do on the dam before water will be spilling out of the top sluices.

At the Dalles, I swap places with Skip and take over driving. We turn south on 197. To our west and south rise the symmetrical cone of Mount Hood, its snow cap dominating the horizon, shifting from southwest to west to northwest as we

travel south. Skip takes the wheel again. Facing into the sun, he becomes irritable. We stop by the road to have Auntie Ed's lunch, packed by the hotel restaurant. I take over the driving and, with directions from Mumsie and Skip, manage to find a road straight west, then south to a lookout overlooking the west bank of Crater Lake.

We park beside a Packard convertible with two ladies, elegantly dressed. One of them carries a male pekinese, who glares at us from little pig eyes under his fringe of hair. When the lady puts him down and sits on a bench crossing one leg high over the other, he starts pumping the swinging toe of her shoe. When she notices, she grabs him and lifts him in her arms while his pecker gradually slides back into its sheath.

As we gaze down from our lookout, the water of the lake looks pure and cool. We don't seem to be standing on a mountain peak. I try to imagine how many years it took to wear down the sides of the volcano to this level.

It's already midafternoon, and Skip insists on driving. He seems to have recovered his good spirits, and asks, "What did you think of that, Little Lyle?"

Mumsie says, "It looked pure enough to drink."

I say, "Well, Hen, I felt like peeling off my clothes and diving in."

"Me,too."

Something goes wrong at Klamath Falls. From driving into the afternoon sun, Skip's irritability has returned. We find our cabin on the outskirts, and stop at the office where Mumsie and I go for the key. Mumsie walks to our double cabin, and I walk back toward the car. When Skip tries to park, he gives it too much gas and nicks a guardpost with a hubcap and comes to a halt with a bang.

"God damn it to hell, Lyle! You park this rattletrap! It's too much for me!"

I'm back at the boot, waiting to unload our luggage. He flings me the keys and stamps off to his mother. I unpack Skip's bag and his mother's and Auntie Ed's basket of fruit and carry them over and place them on the doorstep. Then I walk back and slam down the lid of the trunk. I feel isolated and mad. He didn't damage the car, and why make such a fuss? I don't know what I'm doing. I walk away along the dusty road, not looking back. I walk for a quarter to a half mile before I come to my senses. I keep on walking for a while, as if I'm out for a stroll. Finally I turn back to the cabin, open the trunk, and get my suitcase. I go in where they are waiting at the table. We eat the rest of the lunch and help ourselves from the fruit basket.

It's very awkward. We try to pretend nothing has happened. Even when we separate for Mumsie to go to her room and Skip and me to ours, we are not talking. I still can't figure out what happened. It's as if Skip reverted to some childhood before I knew him. He's behaving the same way Kenneth Lynch used to when he would take the hammer to his father's teeter-totter invention. We can hear Mumsie in her room preparing for bed, using the john, adjusting the window, closing the door. Skip goes to the john and comes back, and I take my turn. We get into our single beds. After a while I fall asleep. Sometime in the night Skip comes to my bed, lifts the cover, and slides in. He is very gentle and loving. I give myself to him.

In the morning it's as if nothing happened. We eat more of Aunt Edie's fruit for breakfast. Mumsie is conciliatory.

She says, "You were very quiet all night, Lyle. I never heard a peep from your bed, but Skip was so restless. He tossed and turned all night long."

When we come to the border crossing into California, it's different from it has been going from any other state into another state. There's a border patrol. An inspector comes to the car, stands over us as I open the trunk, paws over our

luggage, then tells me, "You can't carry fruit into California. You can eat as much as you want to at one of our tables, but to protect our fruit from pests, there's a law against imports."

-10-

We are stopping with the Harrisons at 143 Buena Vista Avenue with a view looking out over the city and the bay. Auntie Cal is the sparkplug of the family. Pop is hardly visible though much in evidence. There's a younger son Bill who has just returned from hitching a ride with a truck driver to San Diego and back. He tells how when he's out driving he has learned to make himself known to the drivers of long distance haulers by blinking headlights and they blink back. He's a likable fellow but I can't figure out what he does for a living.

The second afternoon another son, Lou, appears and Skip is eager for me to show off my skill at the piano. I play Marche Militaire and Minuet a L'Antique, and as sometimes happens when I get emotionally tight it's as if I'm geared up to a high pitch and both pieces go well. Skip is looking to Lou for approval, and Lou asks if I know any Bach. I go to the bedroom and come back with my copy of the Presser Masterpieces of the Piano and, gritting my teeth, play the "Fugue in G Major" that I've been working on off and on at the Irelands'. It doesn't go well, especially the closing crescendo and Coda that I play far too fast, but I trust Lou won't notice.

To my surprise, he pushes me off the bench and plays the whole piece at about half the speed I played it, and brings out every melodic theme, and concludes with a double forte that raises the hair on my scalp. I feel as if I've made a damned fool of myself. Lou leaves in a hurry, saying he has to get over to Mills College for a tutorial. I'm wondering whether he is the student or the teacher.

-11-

The next afternoon Auntie Cal calls me to the phone, and it's Lou asking if he can pick me up and bring me down into the

city for dinner with a couple of his friends. He implies that it might be for all night. For some reason, he doesn't invite Skip and it crosses my mind that maybe Mumsie and Auntie Cal want me out of the way so they can have Skip to themselves for a while.

We follow the trolley tracks all the way downtown to Green Street, wherever that is, and go by intricate passages to the apartment of Irene Sutton and Alisha, where we sit on the floor and eat seafood and drink powerful highballs, all the time talking about poetry. Irene and Alisha seem impressed that I have had poems in American Prefaces. Alisha is older than Irene but tries to look just as young.

They have cleared away everything but our highball glasses. We are still sitting cross legged on the floor, my head resting against the cushioned seat of an easy chair shoved against the wall behind me. Lou is hardly saying anything but seems somehow orchestrating the proceedings. Alisha remarks that Irene is a poet, and Irene minimizes herself: "I haven't had anything printed in American Prefaces or any other nationally known magazine."

I ask, "Do you have something you can read to us?"

Alisha reaches behind her and picks up a thick manuscript with pages stapled together inside a leather cover. She hands it to Irene, and Irene starts reading.

It's a love poem in iambic pentameter, a sonnet.

I ask her to read another, and when she finishes, ask "Do you always use the Shakespearean stanza?"

She asks, "What do you mean?"

I explain that the original Italian sonnet has two stanzas rhyming abba abba and a sestet with any combination of three rhyme endings except it shouldn't end in a couplet. The sonnet used by Shakespeare has three stanzas rhyming abab cdcd efef and ending in a couplet gg, and that is the form she has used, and "Do you use the same form throughout your book?"

She laughs and says, "Let's see if I do. I think I do but I didn't realize I was imitating Shakespeare."

Alisha asks, "Are there other kinds of sonnets?"

I say, "A good many. A lot of poets like to put their stamp on the form. For sonnets Spenser borrows from his Faerie Queene, whose stanza is run over abab bc bc c, and the last line has an extra foot or is Alexandrian. That line has six iambic feet tucked onto a stanza that is basically pentameter."

Irene continues reading her poems, and we spend the whole evening on them, commenting on imagery and diction, especially her liking for a symbolic image that, once she uses it, is apt to turn up in another poem.

Alisha asks, "What do you think of the book as a whole?"

I ask, "Have you submitted any of the poems?"

"Not really. You see, they are private. They are written to somebody I love."

"Well that is what a lot of poets have done. I'm sure you know Sonnets from the Portuguese and Edna Millay's Fatal Interview."

Alisha is looking at Irene, who says quickly, "Indeed I do. She is our poet. She's the one who had most influence on me."

"I was sure of it because she often uses the Shakespearean form."

Alisha asks, "Have you written any sonnets?"

I start reciting:

Mind on the white horse of his dreams

Soars to the zenith, falls back to the ground,

Crawls hands and knees into the dusty seams

Where earth is shorn of light, bereft of sound..

but I can't remember all of it.

I say "It ends with a couplet

All this and more deserves the truant mind

that soaring too near the sun was driven blind.

Irene asks, "Can I find a copy? Is it published?"

I say, "I think it will come out in American Prefaces."

Alisha asks, "Do you have any thoughts about where Irene might find a publisher?"

"I haven't found one. But what you can do, Irene, why don't you send a copy of the sequence to Professor Richard Brown, Secretary to the Bread Loaf School of English, Middlebury, Vermont, and ask if there's a chance you might have a scholarship for next summer? You may not find a publisher in summer school, but if you stay on for the Conference, you may meet somebody who can help you."

Alisha has been copying the name and address.

Irene says, "Oh, thank you so much. I've heard of the Writers' Conference, but I couldn't afford it."

"If you get a scholarship for summer school, all you have to do is agree to wait on table for the Conference, and you can stay for free. I did that for three summers."

I have had such a good time that I'm looking forward to staying with Lou all night. I'm sure that Irene and Alisha are lovers and that the poems are addressed to Alisha. I'm quite disappointed when we get in the car, to have Lou drive me straight back to Buena Vista Avenue. Before dropping me off he does say that day after tomorrow he'll be happy to accept Skip's and my invitation to ride with us down the coast to Monterey and Carmel to visit the stone house and tower of Robinson Jeffers.

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It turns out that Lou doesn't go, and it's Bill instead, and he drives the car all the way down and back. He's flashing headlights and waving like mad at truck drivers, and they respond every time by flashing back.

Skip insists on my seeing the campus of Stanford, and gives me a quiz: "How do you pronounce S - A - N J - O - S - E?"

On guard, I respond instantly, "San Ho say."

"How'd ya know that?"

"We read some stories by H'wa keen Miller in American Literature. I learned the J is pronounced H."

"I didn't expect you to know that."

We skirt Monterey and go directly to Carmel, and stop for an hour parked on the beach in front of Robinson Jeffers' flat stone house and look up the path to Hawk Tower.

"I wish I could go to the door and knock and tell him I read his poems, and came all the way from Maine to see him."

"Why don't you?"

"He's private. He carried all those stones by himself one by one and built the house and tower."

"Well, why don't you go up and knock?"

"It wouldn't be fair. He doesn't even write for himself. He writes for the hawks and eagles and rocks and surf that will be here when they're no people to raise cain."

Bill says, "Sometimes he walks to Monterey and comes back with a bagful of groceries thrown over his shoulder."

We start back. At a long pier stretching out into the ocean short of Monterey, we rent a cabin and go for a swim in the bay. It's my first time in the ocean. Skip and Bill are experts. I tag after them, and in an incredibly short time lose sight of them as I dog paddle in the trough between incoming waves. The water is very cold, and, looking back, I discover I've been carried by the tide farther than I realized. The pier, and the circle of beach with umbrellas and swimmers toasting in the sun, seem a long way back. I'm in panic. I draw in gulps of salt water. I have to work hard to stay afloat. Each time a wave crests carrying me to the top, I can see the shore drawing nearer only by inches. I'm not sure I can make it. Finally a giant wave lifts me and slams me down on the sand. My legs are so weak I can hardly stand. Around me the soapy edge of the surf is pouring back under the next cresting wave. I manage to stagger beyond the swoop of the water pouring over my head and pulling under my feet. I don't yell. I drag

myself a few yards onto the dry sand beyond reach of the waves, and fling myself down. A long time later when Skip and Bill come back, they are talking about the undertow and how it gets a few people every year. I mention my scare.

On the beach we eat lunch prepared by Mumsie and Auntie Cal. All the way from San Francisco in the morning, I rode the brake, but going back in the afternoon, Skip insists I sit on his lap so we are both having the full view. I am like a child. Skip hugs me on his lap. He and Bill are talking. I'm saying nothing. I become aware of his erection. I'm riding his bone all the way back up the coast and into the city. I know that Skip knows fully as well as I do that my erection matches his own. It's wonderful to be wanted the way I can feel he wants me, and I know I want him. There's no doubt it's the happiest afternoon in my life.

-13-

On our last day in San Francisco, Lou shows up in the morning to take us by ferry to Oakland to Mills College. It turns out he is some kind of teacher. We go into the empty gym, where he gives us a lesson in ballet. I'm rather loose and responsive, but he pokes fun at Skip:

"You're the most muscle bound person I ever saw in my life."

From Oakland we drive to Berkeley to have a look at the University, and grab lunch under trees where there are a dozen to twenty tables of chess in progress. A pro walks fast from table to table, takes a look at the board, makes one move, and passes on to the next. Apparently, he has little difficulty beating all these players.

We get back to Buena Vista in late afternoon, where Mumsie and Auntie Cal prepare our going-away banquet. We stuff ourselves knowing we'll be back on starvation diet tomorrow. After dinner we all go down to an amusement park. Bill persuades Skip to join him in a ride on a newfangled rocket ship that's hung at

the end of a gigantic arm fastened to an axle raised by a steel tripod a few rods in the air. After half a dozen riders are strapped in, the arm shuttles in an arc upwards, at first slowly, then hurtling all the way to the top and completing the circle with a kind of halting, grinding motion that keeps picking up speed, then slowing down and going faster again. I'm glad I had the sense not to get in. I get dizzy watching. After fifteen or twenty gyrations the cabin comes back for the attendant to unstrap the passengers. Bill is OK, but Skip is so wobbly that he staggers over to the edge of the crowd and upchucks his dinner.

Mumsie is very concerned because he's so pale, but by the time we get back to the house, he's able to keep down a little something, and by morning he has recovered.

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We are sent off with a basketful of sandwiches, and oranges and bananas and grapes. I expected we'd strike off east of the city, but, instead Skip drives us back past the Presidio and over the Golden Gate Bridge the way we came. It's our last look at the soaring arch and the bay and the city. We turn northeast to Sacramento and the state capital before heading southeast to Yosemite where we stay overnight.

I think Skip is as much relieved as I am for us to be alone with each other. Although we never defined our relationship, it defined itself on that night west of Chicago when on Skip's initiative we had sex for the first time. We are not lovers but buddies. I don't ask for an explanation of what would have happened if Dottie had been in love with Skip. Now we are back together without anybody interfering. And temporarily that's enough for both of us. Our journey provides its new mileposts.

-15-

North of the Yosemite and then the Sequoia National Park, in the high Sierras, we seem on the roof of the world. Descending, we get lost turning north toward Reno, then east to

Salt Lake City. Skip is no longer expecting mail from Dottie. I find an occasional letter from Amy. At our cabins before crossing the Bonneville Salt Flats we learn about a racer trying to break the speed record. He's not racing anybody, racing against time.

In Salt Lake, we hear the organ and the choir. We spend the night in a cabin on the southeast outskirts. The next day, on a long straight stretch a couple hundred miles southeast of the city, we are traveling parallel to a railroad track. Our road and the track seem magnetically linked, moving alongside each other to infinity. Up ahead we see a trail of smoke left by a train. Gradually we catch up with the caboose, then creep up and pass empty flat car after flat car, then dozens of refrigerator cars. We are gaining on the engine. Skip is driving. At last the engineer is waving at us. Skip and I wave back.

Our roadster suddenly careens. Our road has taken a 90 degree turn. The railroad track continues. Skip manages to turn the wheel in time, but we are going too fast. I reach down and grab the emergency brake, and pull it all the way back and we spin 180 degrees and are traveling backward at 70 miles an hour. At some point Skip takes his foot off the gas. We end up ass-forwards on the left side of the road, our spare tire a buffer against a concrete mile post. We are facing the direction we came from. When I jump out, I see to the east a speck approaching on a bee line. Before reaching us, the car slows down. I wave it on. We don't need a witness to this foolishness.

Skip is folded over the steering wheel.

"Lyle, I nearly killed you!"

I don't feel panic, very cool. Our journey together has become so precious the threat of death can't scare me. A tiny pig is resting against our left rear hubcap, shivering all over at his narrow escape. I walk around the front of the car, ask

Skip to move over, start the engine, take a U turn, and continue on the road stretching east farther than sight can see.

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Crossing the plains east of the Rockies, we are engulfed by the prairies. Farms lie along the roadside, a landscape of New England except the flatness, the size of the farms, and everywhere windmills.

We stop in Iowa City to call on the staff of American Prefaces, who encourage me to continue to submit poems. East of there, near Davenport, we cross the Mississippi, above Mark Twain's Hannibal, and so far above the Ohio tributary that in late summer the river seems hardly a trickle, with mudflats and phantom shorelines hinting at the river in flood. We pass Chicago at noon with no effort to communicate with "Uncle Fred Randall." Our primary objective, on Skip's tongue more than on mine, is our reunion with Amy in LeRoy, south of Rochester, New York. It's September 5, the weather to the east looks ominous.

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We were sunburned black and our unwashed clothes were so filthy that when we pulled into the driveway of Mrs. Dunn, where Amy had breakfast and lodging and where we were to be "put up" for two nights, we were welcomed with a blank stare before being invited to come in. At that hour Amy was still in school. We were shown to our room -- not Amy's, though she was temporarily staying at Aunt Hopie Macpherson's, where she boarded for lunch and dinner. Nothing was said, but I gathered it would have been unseemly for us to sleep in Amy's room, or for Amy to sleep in the house where she found a room for her boyfriend.

Shaved, showered, and changed by the time Amy came in midafternoon, we looked more presentable.

"I managed to get excused from study hall. Frank Copp stood in for me."

At Aunt Hopie's for dinner, we met people I'd been hearing about in letters -- Aunt Molly, a spinster, Aunt Hopie's sister-

in-law, who gave Amy piano lessons. I liked both ladies at once, both because they seemed prepared to like me, and because Amy wrote so much about them. "Miss Molly is very special. Her tomcat sprays on furniture, but she won't have him altered, she says, because, 'I've been lonely enough all my life, I wouldn't have him miss all that fun.'"

There was also Mildred Burton, an abysmally proper young lady from Rochester, whose great pride was that for years when she was in high school and college, she had been an usher for the Eastman School of Music's concert season. Although too proper to be creative, she was considered the authority on all things musical. I was relieved that Amy was wise enough not to call on me to play on Miss Molly's piano. I took Amy for a ride in our car to Batavia over the route we had just traveled. We talked very stiffly about her teaching and mine. Even after we came back to park in front of Aunt Hopie's where she had a room that night, we were properly sedate. It seemed to be her choice in this surrounding where her students were everywhere. And I was too aware of my coming separation from Skip to be able to transfer my feelings to a girl.

The next day was another full schoolday for Amy. That night Amy invited one of the young teachers to join us for dinner at a good restaurant. She chose Dora DeWitt, a French teacher, who had the name for a flirt, and therefore, Amy evidently thought, the right girl for Skip, whom she classified at Bread Loaf as a skirt chaser. Dora was too flirtatious for Skip. In his present mood, he was not looking for a rebound from Dottie. On my mind was the realization that tomorrow in New York City would be our last night together.

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Skip and I made no mention of our coming separation. In New York we would be guests of John Farrar, who had booked a room for us in the hotel where Farrar and Rinehart entertained

visiting authors. It was a hurried breakfast at Aunt Hopie's. Amy had to get off to school, and we had a long journey. Talk at breakfast was weather, a great rain and high wind coming in from the sea beginning to ravage the New England coast. Even as far west as LeRoy the sky had an ugly cast. It was beginning to drizzle enough to put up side curtains. Instead of traveling to Albany, we were taking a route toward Elmira in the southern tier.

Somewhere south of Bath the storm struck. We stopped to change drivers and fasten sidecurtains more securely. Before Skip could start the engine, he gave me a pat on the knee, and said, "Well, Little Lyle, good buddy, we have come a long way. I hope you've enjoyed it as much as I have."

It was too much for me. I cried, "I love you, Skip. You are not my buddy, I love you. Somebody has got to know. I know it's the end but I want you to know how I feel about you. This trip with you has been the high point of my life. All I can say is 'I love you.' I really love you."

After a long silence, he said, "I wish you hadn't said it. It makes all the difference."

He started the car and drove on. I sat on my side not looking at him. I had spoiled everything. We changed drivers again in Elmira and again in Binghamton, and again when I took over to drive into the city. We'd crossed the Hudson on Bear Mountain Bridge, a new bridge that Skip knew about and was proud of. He talked about its construction. We finished our journey on the east side of the river. We found a parking garage way up on Riverside near the International House, took out one suitcase each and rode by subway downtown to our room on the twelfth floor of the Wellington Hotel, where John Farrar was to meet us and take us to dinner.

Afterward, we went to see Our Town -- with Thornton Wilder standing in for the Stage Manager. He was John Farrar's classmate at Yale. After the performance we went to the dressing

room and met Mr. Wilder. It crossed my mind to tell him I was teaching at Bates in his home state, but I didn't. I could also have told him I had read The Bridge of San Luis Rey, and how much I admired The Woman of Andros. I was tongue tied in his presence. I hardly knew how I felt. Mr. Farrar was going to take us on a tour of nightclubs. "I'll take you to Harlem. You'll see a New York you've never even guessed at."

I excused myself. "I'm dead tired. It's been a hard day. If you'll excuse me, I'll go back to the hotel."

I got undressed and into my pajamas but I couldn't sleep. I sat by the window looking way down at traffic flowing, dark night, streets shining with rain, cars slithering through gloom. It was like the brink of Niagara. I wanted to open the window and jump. I sat there for hours.

When I heard Skip's key in the lock, I moved quickly. By the time he came in, I was in bed. I heard him in the bathroom. He was three sheets to the wind, could hardly negotiate between the bureau and the bathroom door. He was holding onto the bureau, and grabbed the back of a chair. At last he made it to bedside. I could hear the rustle of his peeling his clothes off. My eyes felt the sudden shock of total darkness when he turned off the light. His bedsprings settled. I was lying almost without breathing. Although he had passed out, he was filling the room with his presence.

After a long time, I crossed to his bed and cuddled against him, and he came out of his drowse and we had sex. He gave a great sigh afterward, turned his back and dropped into a deep sleep. For a while I lay there, not touching him, but hearing him breathing. Then I went back to my bed. It took a long time to go to sleep.

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At breakfast he was not communicative, saying only, "You shouldn't have come to my bed, Lyle."

We took the Post Road east and began to encounter hurricane damage. Trees were down. At the intersection with Route 7 we turned north to Danbury, then right turn on route 6 northeast to Hartford. It was slow going, trees down, sometimes telephone and electric lines. In small towns the town commons and main streets were devastated. Some places we were held back a half hour or an hour. When we finally got to Northfield, where I was headed to see Clayton, two rows of ancient maples on both sides of the street were, many of them, splintered like jackstraws and heaped lying against each other or crushed against houses .

I tracked Glayt down to a double house just south of the Town Hall, where Ruth French and her husband were taking care of baby Donna. Luckily Clayt was there, not having been able to get to Millers Falls to the Tool Factory.

Donna is a big baby, already a person, with great staring eyes as if looking for her mother.

Clayt is holding her, giving her her bottle.

"She's a good girl, no trouble at all. Where did you come from?"

"From New York City, today. Is there anything I can do for you?"

"We're doing just fine. Ruth is putting us up for the time being. Rena Tyler comes in to help."

"Can I hold her?"

"Sure. Ups-a-daisy, here she comes."

She kept right on taking the bottle. In a minute I gave her back.

Clayt said, "She gets her belly full of warm milk, she lets go."

"Where is Larry?"

"Right now down at Junior Leach's. He worked this summer at Hermon, waiting on table for summer conferences. He's getting ready to go to Middlebury."

"I wish I could drive him, but I can't. My friend Skip's in the car. We can't stay long. He has to get back to Tufts, and I want to make it to Lewiston before dinner time. I hope the roads from Boston to Maine are open."

"Isn't it sumpin? Nobody expected it. Northfield's a mess. Main Street will never get over it."

"We've struck roadblocks and trees and wires down everywhere all the way from New York. I suppose we'd better get going. No tell what we'll find from here on."

"If I were you, I'd go to Warwick and down to Orange. It'll save time, and from what I hear Warwick didn't get it so bad."

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We made it to Tufts by middle of the afternoon. I left Skip at the Delta Tau Delta House, where he unloaded his stuff and I was on my way to Mrs. Ireland's on Mountain Avenue and I was back with the Vosmi in time for supper.

BOOK TWO.17WICKED...and Spotless as the Lamb

AMYChapter Eighteen

-1-

"Dear Lyle,

"Your visit was a breath of fresh air. I hope Skip wasn't too put out with Dora DeWitt. I should have known more than pair him up with her. She is witless but harmless.

"Our weather turned bad after you left. All I could think of all day was how the two of you must have been caught in the storm. The papers have been full of the New England hurricane. We got the tail end of it, and lost some branches from trees all over town. On Main Street in front of Mrs. Dunn's one maple toppled onto the telephone wires, and we were without telephone for a day, but that is the worst of our damage.

"Miss Molly and Aunt Hopie send you their love. They both of them took to you two boys. I feel lucky to have them for friends. I like Mrs. Dunn, but she has never been a friend like the MacPhersons, especially Miss Molly.

"I'm anxious for your news. I hope you got to Northfield and found everything all right with Clayton and the baby. And I suppose Lawrence is on his way to Middlebury right now. It must make you proud to know you can help your brother through college. I can't imagine what it must be like, because I never had a little brother or sister.

"I know it must be a drain on you, and I'm very proud to know somebody who thinks of his brother the way you think about Larry. I'm sure he deserves everything you do for him, and that he is grateful. My folks haven't the slightest idea what you go through in order to help Larry.

"Someday I hope to be able to have a share in some undertaking as selfless as what you have taken on yourself.

"Meanwhile, I'm imagining you there at the Irelands' preparing for your first classes. I'm somewhat envious of your being able to teach students old enough to appreciate the difference between a poem in the LEROY MESSENGER and Frost's "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening." Right now, I'm trying to teach my seniors the difference and the similarity between a paragraph and a quartrain. We have a unit on Content and Form in our New York Board of Regents outline, and I'm laboring to find examples that may be useful next April when the class will be facing Regents examinations. I suppose I should feel good that I've been chosen to teach a Regents class. I want to give them something more than a rote definition.

"I'm eager to have a letter telling me you are safe in Lewiston and not roadblocked somewhere between New York City and Northfield.

Affectionately,

Amy

Dear Amy,

I found your letter waiting when I arrived here in late afternoon. We got to New York safely in spite of the hurricane, which struck us near Bath. We got only the remnants of the storm that hit New England, but it was enough. We drove all the way in the downpour. John Farrar put us up in the Wellington Hotel at the corner of Seventh Avenue and West 55th Street, and took us to dinner at a swank restaurant. Afterward he had tickets to see Thornton Wilder's Our Town with Thornton Wilder standing in for the actor who played the Stage Manager. Turned out that Wilder and Farrar were in the same class at Yale, so we got taken backstage to the dressing room and were introduced to Mr. Wilder in shirtsleeves, removing makeup. I didn't have sense enough to mention that I'm teaching at Bates in his home state, and that I once played the part of the baby wheeled on stage at the beginning of The Long Christmas Dinner and at the end of the one-act hobbling off as an old man.

I was dead on my feet and failed to make any impression on the great man.

Farrar offered to take us on a tour of night clubs in Harlem, but I let him and Skip go by themselves, and went back to the hotel and got a full night's sleep. The drive into New England was a nightmare. Fallen trees everywhere blocking the roads. We took backroads and sideroads, and finally managed to reach Northfield, which was in a shambles, that beautiful main street--with a double row of maples in a green along both sides of the highway--simply ruined, those trees reduced to kindling.

I spent a halfhour with Clayt and Donna the baby, then we drove to Somerville, where Skip unloaded his truck, and I drove on to Lewiston arriving here in time for dinner with the two high school teachers who board just up street with the same family I boarded with last year.

I'm glad to find Mrs. Ireland the same undemonstrative but friendly landlady and my room ready. After supper I was suddenly lonely, and wondered how in the world between now and Monday I can adjust to teaching three classes in freshman English and two in American Literature. I walked partway across campus and turned north past the athletic field and up the long street to Thorn Crag. That knob (scarcely a hill) is a mile out of town from where you can look back on college and city. Way off to the west the last rays of sun shone on the Androscoggin, and between me and the river a train whistle lost itself in its own smoke as the train gathered speed going north toward Augusta. I started a poem in my head but it doesn't go anywhere:

Far back in the dusk the streamlined train
blows at a crossing, a thin rain
falls on my face lifted to hear
if the sound has a passing meaning here...

I can't seem to work it into any reasonable larger "meaning" beyond the image, so all it is is an unformulated fragment.

If you were here, perhaps you could give me an inkling what it means.

Yours, as ever

Lyle

P.S. Please write soon.

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I cleaned out the Chevrolet of road maps and paper bags full of crusts of dry bread and scraps of ham or cheese, and filled Mrs. Ireland's rubbish barrel with debris from our travel, and hosed down the car and went over the inside with a broom brush and dustbin and drove the car over to Auburn to the same dealer I bought it from, and to my astonishment he paid me \$200, the same price I paid for it. I didn't bargain. That is what he offered. I am able to buy myself a pair of pants and put fifty dollars into my savings account toward Larry's second semester tuition, and mail him a hundred dollars for books and fees and whatever he needs to get started. I was feeling guilty about not being able to help him get settled, and now I feel better.

I find that if I put my mind to it, I can get back into the rut of preparing lessons and meeting classes. There are a few of last year's freshmen in American Literature, but on the whole I have mostly new students and a fresh start.

We have a new boarder at the Vosmi. Besides Eleanor McCue and Nellie May Lang, and Earl McGee, Earl has brought along the new classics teacher Joe Conant, a young graduate of Columbia, and we all five have started coming here to the attic after dinner to play bridge. I am if anything glad to have a fifth to add to our foursome. It makes it easier for me to beg off when I have a stack of papers. Maybe I won't have to sit up all night quite so often.

Eleanor has passed her fortieth birthday. One night she was complaining how old she feels and worthless. She's trying to give up smoking, and finally, after having lighted her fifth

cigaret of the evening and thought better of it, and crushed it out in the ashtray after taking only a puff or two, she said, "I'm an old hasbeen, falling apart. I don't read anything, I teach by rote, I can't even get any pleasure out of smoking a cigaret."

Without thinking what I'm saying, I grab a line from Robert Frost, "The slow, smokeless burning of decay," and we all burst out laughing.

On Saturday night after we have all been there till after midnight, I don't know what gets into me. All the others have gone, and I have gone downstairs and brushed my teeth and gone to bed, and down at the north end of the corridor beyond the bathroom the Irelands have been in bed hours earlier and their grandson in the small room next to mine has gone home for the weekend.

Without really thinking what I'm doing, I get up in the dark, grab my wool bathrobe from the chair back and, instead of going to the bathroom, carefully pull open the door to the attic, and one stair at a time work my way up into Eleanor's dark bedroom, and creep over and sit on the edge of her bed and listen to her heavy breathing. Very slowly, I have stretched out beside her and have run my right arm under her pillow and am cradling her head against me. She wakes up, and I whisper, "Shhh," and she says, "Lyle," and I pull up the bedclothes and peel off my bathrobe, and am in bed with her, pushing my hard cock against her, and she is yielding to me. I don't really penetrate, but push partway into the warm lips between her legs, and she starts moving with me. We are both of us absorbed in our movement. After a while I can hear her breathing faster, and can feel her opening to me, but I still don't enter, and I feel a tremor go through her, and she falls back limp and I'm still leaning over her. Then I withdraw, and she whispers, "Lyle, you must never do this again. Nobody else ever came up here like this, not even Gus Bushman when he was living in your room."

I whisper, "Ok, I promise. I'm going back down now and, just in case the Irelands have heard anything, when you hear the door close at the bottom of the stairs, I want you to come down and use the bathroom and come back up to bed."

I kiss her and go downstairs one stair at a time, afraid my bones may creak, but they don't and there's hardly a creak from any stair louder than a mouse might be making up in the back attic over the Irelands' bedroom. I push open the door at the foot of the stairs and am back in my bed.

I hear Eleanor come heavily downstairs and into the bathroom and hear the toilet flushed and then water running in the washbasin, and she goes back upstairs, and all is quiet in the house. Somehow purged by Eleanor's satisfaction and the strain of making my escape, I fall into my own deep sleep.

-3-

"Dear Lyle,

"I want to apologize for what I said to you. I can't take back any of what happened between us and don't want to. I am sure we both understand it was an interval never to be repeated, but for the life of me I can't regret one bit of it.

"I hope you can find time to come down to see me. You can stay overnight here any weekend as you did last year. We can go out on the town, and I especially want you to have the book of maps we used as a guide for our trip. I find I have it, but I meant you to have it.

"I will always be grateful for your taking me on that trip. I know now that Dottie and I will never get together. It was an adolescent dream and bound to end where it did. I am writing to Eleanor Joyce and have been invited to Dartmouth for Thanksgiving.

"I hope you will have time before then some weekend to come here.

"I will be graduating in June, and I expect Mumsie will come and we can all get together.

As ever your friend,
Skip

Dear Skip,

Thanks for your letter. It means a great deal to me. As a matter of fact, my colleague Earl McGee, Rhodes Scholar, who has taught here four or five years longer than I have, wants me to have lunch with him in Boston on Sunday before Columbus Day. I could come Saturday afternoon, stay overnight with you and meet Earl for lunch in the city. We have a ride back with the German professor who arranges programs for guest artists. Gus is driving to his mother's in Winchester, where he will stay overnight in order to bring back to Bates E.Power Biggs, the celebrated Cambridge organist, who will give a program in our chapel Sunday evening. Please let me know whether it will be convenient to meet me downtown wherever you like, and we can have dinner together and a show, and I'll come back for overnight at Delta Tau Delta, then take the bus in to the city for lunch with Earl. I wondered if I could ever make the transition back to teaching after our trip, which gave me my introduction to everything west of New York state. Although it was not in any way an academic expedition, for me it was the best kind of scholarship, an opportunity to see firsthand so many places my students and I encounter in American Literature. Without opening a book or making a round of libraries, museums and galleries, I have gained an invaluable sense of the width and grandeur of our country. Without you it would have been impossible.

I like what I'm doing. I think teaching is what I was made for. I feel ignorant and am a student myself, learning with my classes. I think Amy believes I ought to go on to get another degree, but I'm not sure. I am still writing poems, and have been invited next week to speak to the Bates Poetry Club. I'll let you know how it goes. I don't intend to be erudite; in

fact, I'm particularly steered away from talking about any one poet or poetry movement. They want me to talk about what poetry means to me, and to read some of my own poems. Except for the few accepted by American Prefaces, I haven't published anything. I feel like a charlatan to be talking as if I'm an established poet, but maybe that's the way every poet feels in the beginning. Here's a poem I've just finished and will mail to Iowa and see that they think of it:

We walked a little way beyond
the wind-rough, solitary pond
and watched a blown bird melt away
through saffron ebbing into gray;
a drowsy thrush from close at hand
protested to the dusk-drugged land,
and then the need for speech awoke
but they were gone of whom we spoke.

I won't try to explain it, except to say that the landscape is pretty much the woods west of the dormitory at Mount Hermon, where I used to walk nights and listen to thrush music and whippoorwills after a full day and evening as housemaster taking care of 100 boys. The last line turns back on a theme that is always with me since my folks died. I can't escape from it. Do you think it's necessary to give a poem a title? I have a preference for letting the image and incident speak for itself, but I'd like to know what you think.

Yours,

Lyle

-4-

One of the girls in my afternoon American Literature, a senior, asks if I will come to dinner at the big upperclass women's dormitory across from the Chapel, and play background music on the piano for a dinner they're having next Saturday.

They've invited an English professor from Colby to come down from Waterville to speak, and they want something to add some cultural depth to the party. I'm immediately in panic but I don't refuse and come back to the Irelands and go to work picking out easy pieces from my book of "Great Themes from the Classics," that could be titled "Classics Made Easy for Dunderheads." I think I can make a go of it, and arrive there a few minutes early and try out their piano, which is better than the Irelands'.

It turns out not too bad. I play a Chopin interlude as a fanfare for them to enter, and then tinkle around from one well-known classical theme to another while they are having their dinner. As a finale (remembering what Harry Owen once did at Professor Hathaway's student recital at Middlebury), I play the whole first part of Franz Schubert's Impromptu in E-Flat in my Theodore Presser Master Pieces for the Piano, and for good measure play it over again at a somewhat different tempo, varying the pianissimos and crescendos. For conclusion, I play very sweetly and simply Beethoven's Minuet in G, which is the first piece I ever played in public at that recital for Marian Webster, when I was a sophomore at Northfield High School. I get a big hand when I fold up my music.

The girl who invited me comes over and thanks me and invites me to the head table to meet the speaker and faculty guests and have my dinner, but I'm not eager to wolf down a dinner in front of people who've finished theirs. And I don't really care to meet the speaker and listen to his speech, so I ask for a plate in the kitchen, and eat in peace and make my way out of the side door back to the Irelands.

The next day I get a note from Mrs. Chase (wife of the retired Classics professor, a son of a former president of Bates) -- one of the guests at the head table -- congratulating me on playing the Schubert and Beethoven. "I was so pleased to have you conclude your evening with those two lovely classics in

toto!" I was awfully glad I hadn't had to go over to the table and meet them and have to explain that my in toto was not total at all, because I left out the second-part variations in the Schubert. I surely wouldn't have enjoyed having Mrs. Chase inform me in public that she knew that most of my program was scratched up from a scrabbag of make-overs for amateurs.

-5-

The Columbus Day weekend trip to Boston begins with my traveling by bus Saturday afternoon to meet Skip at Park Street station in Boston. We have dinner in a coffeeshop and go to an indifferent movie, then to Harvard Square, where we pick up a local bus dropping us off on the hill at the east corner of Tufts campus. There is almost nobody else at Delta Tau Delta. He has laid out the book of travel maps for me. Skip has the bottom bunk in a double on one side of the room, and puts me in the bottom of another double bunk opposite. We are both tired and go to bed immediately. We lie there in the dark talking.

"What are you doing for Thanksgiving?"

"Amy has invited me to Bennington. I can take a bus to Boston after my last morning class on Wednesday. I'll stay overnight at the Y. Thursday morning I'll catch a train from North Station to Williamstown, where she will meet me. What are you doing?"

"Professor Joyce has invited me to Hanover. I'll go up and back by train."

"Is Eleanor in college?"

"She's a senior in high school. She's not sure where she'll go next year. It'll be some time before we can get married."

"Amy seems to think it's time for us to be thinking about it. She's a year younger than I am but will catch up in December when she has her birthday. She says she never had a birthday party. Because of December weather, her mother always

celebrated both birthdays in July, Olive's birthday. Result is Amy never had a party."

"Will Amy drive home from LeRoy?"

"Another English teacher, Henry Richardson, lives somewhere west of Albany. They will make the trip together. He doesn't have a car. You saw her new Chevvie coupe when we were in LeRoy. Olive has suddenly left Bennington and got a new job in Malden. She has offered me a ride back there to catch a bus to Lewiston Sunday afternoon."

"How old is Amy anyway?"

"We'll both be 27 in December. We were born six months apart in the same year."

"You don't look that old. You look around nineteen."

"I sometimes wish I looked older. My students might have some respect for me."

"From what you say in your letters, they already do have."

"Sometimes I wish I were fifty."

"I showed your poem to John Holmes. I like it."

"What did he say about it?"

"He thinks it's overimaged."

"I tried to make it musical."

"He read it and gave it back and said it's overimaged."

"Who is he anyway?"

"He teaches our course in poetry. He's had poems in the Atlantic Monthly."

"I've only had mine in American Prefaces. So far, they take anything I send them. They took the poem 'Mind on the white horse of its dreams...'"

"I liked that poem."

"Well, they took it, then Ted Morrison asked if he could send it to Saturday Review, where Bennie DeVoto is Editor. Bennie wrote Ted and asked if he knew any young poets. He was out of patience with the stuffy poems they were getting for the Review, so I wrote to Iowa and asked for permission to recall it

and they gave it, and Ted sent it to Bennie, who sent it right back and said it wasn't at all what he wanted. Ted was upset. He sent it back and said he would never again recommend anything to anybody. I sent it back to Iowa, and they wrote back a funny letter saying they wanted it, but I should never again try to resubmit a poem they had accepted and then I asked to recall it. If I recalled it, that was it. I could never again resubmit it."

I was feeling bad because John Holmes said my poem was overimaged. It was very discouraging to have him say it. I'm not sure what that means, and don't ask for an explanation. I tell Skip I have to leave about ten o'clock for my date with Earl McGee, but will sneak out without disturbing him. In a few minutes I realize he has drifted off to sleep, and I roll over and have no trouble falling asleep. I wake up around 9:30, and tiptoe around, going to the john to shower and shave, and then coming back to close my suitcase and tiptoe out and make my way into the fresh air to the busstop where we got out last night. I have an hour and a half (really two hours) to get in to Copley Square to meet Earl in front of the Public Library. In three quarters of an hour no bus at all has come to this corner. I hurry back to the fraternity house and find Skip still sound asleep. I don't want to disturb him. I hurry back to the corner sure I've probably been gone just long enough to miss a bus. It is another half hour before a bus comes. I have only fifteen minutes to get to Copley Square, and there's no way I can make it even though I sit on the edge of my seat trying to urge the bus on. There's no way. I'm three quarters of an hour late, when I rush up to the foot of the library steps and find Earl waiting.

I explain my tardiness as best I can. We grab a sandwich at a drugstore, and find our way by subway and bus to Winchester and our rendezvous with Gus Bushman and E. Power Biggs. Earl

apologizes for our being a quarter hour late, and explains about my trouble getting a bus at Tufts College.

"Lyle waited there at Tufts a full hour and a half to catch a bus to Harvard Square. Maybe it's Sunday morning schedule, different from weekdays."

Mrs. Bushman comes in in time to hear the explanation. She's a big, bossy woman, and butts in, "That's impossible. Our bus service is excellent. He can't possibly have had to wait that long."

Everybody seems embarrassed to have me caught in an outright lie. I suppose they believe I overslept and wouldn't admit it. I don't say a word to excuse myself. How can I tell this woman she's not telling the truth? I can tell that Earl at least is sorry for me. Whether or not he believes Mrs. Bushman, he forgives me for being late. I hate that meddling fussbudget. The other two men are scarcely interested, though they both attended to the spectacle of my being put down.

It's time to be on our way to Lewiston, so I ride in front with Gus, and Earl and Mr. Biggs sit in back. I say hardly a word, and hear very little of the conversation all the way to Lewiston. Gus drops off Earl and E. Power Biggs at the DeWitt Hotel, where Mr. Biggs has a room and Earl is taking him to dinner. Earl insists that I join them, and I don't know how to refuse without more embarrassment, so I have dinner with them and then go to the concert. The music is wonderful. I try to swallow my pride, telling myself what a little matter it is really even if nobody believes I got up in time and made every effort to be on time for my date with Earl.

-6-

The weekend after Columbus Day I'm invited to chaperon a Mountain Club hike to Mount Chocorua in New Hampshire. I have no idea what it means to be chaperon, but I simply dress in slacks and carry a heavy sweater and am at the side of Chapel at eight o'clock where the bus is waiting. The senior in charge

takes a look at my good shoes, and sends me back for walking shoes. All I have are my sneakers. I guess they're all right because by the time I get back the bus is loaded and we take off through downtown Lewiston then cross to Auburn and points west. It turns out I'm the only chaperon, because Mr. and Mrs. Sweet of the History Department backed out at the last minute. I hope we won't have any emergencies.

It's a long way to the mountain. We get caught in a shower halfway up and have to eat soggy sandwiches, but the view from the top is worth it. When we get back to board the bus, everybody has moved around, and I've lost my seat up front with the driver. I take the aisle seat with Marylee Stromson, a tubby freshman in my eight o'clock freshman English, . She seems to be alone with nobody else she knows. We talk about her classes and then about her home up near Machiasport on the coast. She had never intended to go to college, but won a scholarship. I know her for a hardworker but very shy and mostly lacking in imagination. This is the first time really I have noticed her. We stop at a restaurant for smorgasbord, paid-up, part of the price for the trip, so I don't have to pay anything. By the time we reboard, it's getting on to dark, and most of the couples have quieted down. We stop singing Bates College songs and other popular songs. All around us students are coupled, and I can see that Marylee is sleepy. I put my arm across the back of our seat, and she snuggles up and falls asleep, cuddled against me. When we get back to campus, I walk her to her freshman dorm.

-7-

Monday afternoon in my upperclass American Literature we are reading Poe's To Helen and have come to the last stanza:

Lo, in yon brilliant window niche
How statue-like I see thee stand,
The agate lamp within thy hand
"Ah, Psyche from the regions which

Are Holy Land."

Someone asks about "the regions which are Holy Land," and I remind them of the classic imagery we have been noticing all through the poem. I point out that "Nicean" could refer to Phoenicia, which is part of the middle east -- ancient Phoenicia. It is also near the Trojan start of the journey home of Ulysses, during which he suffered such desperate trials before coming home to Ithaca. Besides that, it is the Holy Land of Christian mythology. And I ask if it is possible that Poe may be suggesting that the true religion is not Christianity but the religion of love.

"Classical mythology (filled with violence and sexual anguish), is in Poe's mind a parallel to the combination of ecstasy and anguish of the young lover transfixed as he looks up at the lighted window of the otherwise darkened house where his idealized sweetheart's face is brilliantly lighted by the agate lamp she holds in her hand. Like Helen of Troy, her beauty is remote and inaccessible. It may be a poem of adolescent love and yearning for fulfillment that has no way of being satisfied."

I say, "Scholars point how Poe's poem is packed with ideal, classical imagery, but it is also charged with emotion and unfulfilled desire. And while I can't speak for you, it's true for me that emotion is close to the center of my life. I'm not really a man of intellect but a man of feeling."

In the class there are a half dozen students who were on the weekend bustrip to Chocorua, and a murmur of amusement seems to pass with knowing looks from one to another, and I remember the Bates folklore that many faculty members in the past have chosen their wives from the student body. I probably am blushing as I remind myself that I really have no emotional involvement with

Marylee Stromson no matter how much it may have looked like it.

Fortunately, at this moment, I am saved by the bell.

-8-

In my eight-thirty freshman English class, I go to the blackboard as I often do, and as an example of a suggested topic for the next paper start improvising. I am in effect carried back in my mind to my first year of teaching, when in the grammar school at Northfield I spent many hours with a piece of chalk demonstrating solutions to problems in multiplication and long division, or drew lines on the board and practised Palmer method in front of a class in penmanship.

Today I am showing how easy it is to begin with a simple statement and travel to a satisfying conclusion. With scarcely any forethought, I begin writing almost automatically to create a landscape that will be familiar to my classful of freshmen coming from mostly rural New England. I assume that their backgrounds are close to my own. It's as if I'm letting the chalk have its way to say whatever it chooses.

"It's a warm afternoon in late October. I'm nine years old. I am walking into a birch grove across the ferry road from my house. The tall thin stems of white birches are specked with black and, against the deep blue of the sky, are loaded with golden leaves tossing gently in mild October air. The ground underfoot is carpeted with gold. I am walking into a universe of blue and gold.

"There sweeps over me an absolute communion with this blue and gold perfection. I'm carried out of myself, and yet -- in a strange transmutation -- seem to be for the first time aware of myself as a separate human being. This blue and gold universe accepts me as a self-acknowledging individual who is part of a whole that is much larger than I am. It's the first time in my life that I know I exist--a separate person yet inseparable from a universal Whole."

I explain that what I've just written is something I've never written out or thought through before. It's a kind

of revelation. Now I have to give it a title. I go back to the beginning and write in large letters

THE SENSE OF SELF

I suggest they try to experiment and see if they can go back into their childhood and find a comparable experience. It doesn't have to be philosophical or metaphysical, but can they remember some time when something happened to them and they could remember being aware of themselves as a person looking out at the world? It could be discovering another person, or looking at a landscape, or gaining a sense of family identity, or something happening at school, when you have for the first time a more intense awareness. The trick is to trust your sense of feeling, let yourself go on the level of feeling and emotion -- something not so much on the level of intellect as on the level of the sense of sight, smell, hearing, touch, temperature, or awareness of your body, not belaboring your mind.

-9-

I have taken my armful of freshman themes to correct them in the warm afternoon sunlight on the west slope of Mount David, the granite nub with a sparse covering of vegetation that rears two or three hundred feet high across the street from the Irelands. In Lewiston it's the nearest and closest approximation I can find to the country landscape I grew up with as a boy. Students seldom go to the trouble of climbing the difficult terrain, and I can even in midday find a hollow in the rock where I can remove my shirt and bask in the heat of the sun, securely concealed from the traffic of the street.

This afternoon I find it hard to apply myself to write comments on the papers that originated from my assignment on "The Sense of Self." I am caught up in a sense of grief that is almost removed from myself. As I started out the door with my armload, I learned from Mrs. Ireland that Professor Chase is dead.

I know him only from the few words we exchanged last June when we stood together watching actors from the senior class rehearsing a Greek play on the steps in front of the classic facade of the Library. We exchanged no more than a greeting, then stood there without speech, and Professor Chase didn't come back for another rehearsal. There is no reason for my feeling a personal grief, yet in my loneliness and remoteness from any close friendship here in Lewiston, I feel overwhelmed.

I can't put my mind to these papers. I give up correcting, and make them into a bundle and climb to the top of the rockheap and on the south edge of it look down a nearly perpendicular cliff into the backyard of the house that I have had pointed out to me as the Chases'. I have never been a cliff hanger, yet some uncontrollable urge prompts me to sit down at the summit, and allow myself to slip and slide down the sheer rock face, held from falling only by digging my heels into rough edges of weathered crevices. At the bottom I brush myself off and climb a barbed wire fence into the yard of the Chases'.

At my knock at the side door, I am let into a hall by Earl McGee, who is there, I understand immediately, on strength of friendship far more legitimate than mine. I push in where Mrs. Chase is standing, and quite irrepressibly find myself floundering, "I know what you are feeling. I lost my father and mother without warning both the same day. I'm so sorry for you." I am suddenly feeling that I don't know what I'm talking about. There is an immense difference between my grief and the grief felt by this elderly lady for her husband who died in old age after years of living together and watching their children grow up and leave home until they are alone together. My retrospective flood of shocked grief comes from the violent deaths of Mom and Pop in the prime of life.

Yet I haven't been able to stop myself. In the presence of her grief, I am sniveling over mine. I hardly hear her thanks for my coming. It's as if I'm trying to make her sympathize

with me instead of my sympathizing with her. In sheer abandon, I lean over and kiss her on the cheek, at the same time feeling I am creating the absolute indiscretion toward this proper lady who is in no mood to be kissed by a young stranger who can't possibly comprehend the tender communion between a husband and wife who had decades of family devotion.

I retire as hastily as I came, and have no further contact with the funeral services. Certainly I have no money to send flowers. I can only erase from my consciousness the recollection of my asinine behavior.

-10-

Thanksgiving week begins with three days of classes. My classes close Wednesday at noon. I'm like a schoolboy eager for holiday. I have planned ahead to have corrected and passed back all papers. I take the bus to Boston. It's a beautiful evening and instead of going straight to the Huntington Avenue Y, I ride in to Park Street and walk through the Common, then twist back onto Boylston Street. As I pass a tobacco shop, the owner is locking his door. A spruce middle aged man, he falls in step with me and we walk along talking together, as if we are acquainted. He asks where I'm going, and I tell him. At the joining with Huntington Avenue, he continues walking with me. It's a long way, at least a couple of miles. He asks if I have had supper, and we turn in to a large drugstore and sit at the counter and have sandwiches and coffee. He mentions that he often goes to the Y with a guest, and I think he is suggesting I invite him. I like him. He's very cultivated. We have talked about plays he has seen and music he has heard at Symphony Hall and books some of which we have both read.

"It's perfectly all right for a guest at the Y to invite a friend to his room. I often am invited there."

"I have a room reserved but I haven't checked in."

"That's all right. I will wait in the lobby and after you go to your room, you can come down and get me. I really enjoy talking to you."

"My headmaster at Mount Hermon School has given me my pass. I don't want to take any chance of making trouble for him."

We stand on the sidewalk outside the drugstore, then he continues to walk with me. We cross the street a block from the Y, and walk to the corner of a street turning south.

He says, "This is my street. But I really would like to come up with you."

All I can say is, "I don't feel right about it."

We shake hands and he leaves.

After I check in, I notice a sign on the closed door of my room saying that guests of the Y may not entertain strangers upstairs in their rooms. Just the same I wish he were with me. I go down to the basement swimming pool, and have a swim. There are plenty of men in the shower room who look interesting, but I'm too shy to take more than a quick look at them even if they are looking at me. Even when one of them follows me to my locker, I turn my back and dress hurriedly. I go to my room, and lie awake wishing I had invited the owner of the tobacco shop to come upstairs, but I realize it was impossible. In the narrow room there's just space for one chair, a desk, bureau and cot. -11-

I take the morning train to Williamstown, where Amy meets me. She lets me drive the coupe back to Bennington. By the time we get there, Mrs. Niles and Olive are hurrying to get dinner and Amy pitches in. I go down to the barn and find Walter forking down hay through the hole in the ceiling to the milking shed. We go down and he lets me pour into each manger a half peck of grain while he pitches hay on top. The cows start chomping immediately, flinging up their heads as they catch up a mouthful of hay and stare at us flinging their heads from side to side. It's cold outdoors, but the shed is warm from their

body heat as they rattle their stanchions. There's a sweet smell of clover and ensilage and grain and steam from the munching cattle. Walter is wearing clean overalls over a white shirt and good pants. It sounds like Amy coming across the barn floor up above to the top of the stairs, and her voice bends down as she calls us to dinner.

It's a bountiful dinner and wonderfully cooked, but the narrow room in front of the great fireplace seems crowded by the diningroom table moved in for the occasion. Most of the furniture has simply been pushed into corners. There's a grimness as if the holiday has intruded on the ordinary business of the week. Even the food (so much of it and so tasty) we seem to be expected to enjoy because there is so much of it. Nobody will go hungry, but except for me there are no guests, and I get a feeling I'm there because there was no way not to invite me. There is little talk except, "Pass the potatoes," from Walter, and "Help yourself to the baked squash," from Mrs. Niles, and Amy's "Try the cranberry sauce, Lyle."

Olive seems to be sulking. Unlike last year, this year the phone rings only once. Mrs. Niles answers it, and says, "She's right here." Then, "Olive," as she stretches the cord across the table, and Olive listens and says fretfully, "I'll call you later," and passes the phone back to her mother, who clatters it back in its cradle. I wonder if I'm the cause of the ructions, but somehow I feel they go deeper.

It's a strange couple of days. Amy lets me drive her car, and we drive over and visit Bennington College, which is mostly still as I remember it from 1932, when the Glee Club sang there and it was chiefly a great red barn and a few white dormitory houses. It was hardly different in 1937, five years later, that morning when I woke up in Bennie DeVoto's upstairs bedroom and he carried me for the first time over to the Nileses'. And it hasn't changed much except there's more of those small white New England houses for students and faculty. We take the

curving drive north past the stone farmhouse that has become the president's home, and go through the stone gate down into the village of North Bennington.

Olive spends most of her time correcting papers in the front sitting room. I feel lucky to have got rid of mine before leaving Lewiston. Evenings, Olive goes up to her bedroom early, and Amy and I have the loveseat in the sitting room to ourselves. Nobody comes through the diningroom except to use the bathroom.

We spend most of the evening talking in low voices, whispering, confiding, cuddled together.

-12-

I'm sure there's a story to be told about Olive, but not even Amy gives me an inkling. Sunday morning around ten, Amy and I say goodbye, and Olive and I start back toward Malden and Lewiston. As soon as we are in the car together, her whole attitude changes. She even suggests I can drive as far as Brattleboro, and she will take over for the drive across New Hampshire. During the night it rained, and the roads are slippery. Walter warns me to "Take it easy on Searsburg Mountain," but I think I know the road well enough from having travelled it from North Leverett. As soon as we get away from home, Olive becomes a different person.

I ask her how she likes Malden, and she says, "I have a big load. Every day five classes, three junior and two senior, and all those papers."

"Do you mark every mistake?"

"Well, yes, I do, mostly."

"I do, too, but I tell them to think of it as if I'm an editor. It's their paper, and I'm not telling them how to write so much as informing them what it looks like to me. They can always say, 'To Hell with Glazier!'"

"Yes, true, but these high school students, some of them, are nearly illiterate. And how can you make them give a damn?"

"I try to appeal to their common sense, make them realize that writing is communication, talking to somebody, trying to carry them with you as you find your way through some topic that you have to explain to yourself as well as to somebody else."

"Yes, I know, but in Bennington, there was a long tradition of disciplined writing. A great many students are going on to college, but Malden is altogether different. You're lucky if you can even make them comprehend what a sentence is."

"To say nothing about comprehending the difference between a dependent clause and an..." I am in mid phrase when we come to a stretch of ice on that long downhill on Searsburg, and the car skids out of control. I look down the long hill and lucky for us nobody is coming up toward us, as we zoom across to the left side and the steep embankment down into a valley I don't have time to think about. Instead of jumping on the brake, which couldn't have completely stopped us, and might have slammed us around headon into the guardrail, I let the car have its own head, and we strike a patch of gravel just at the right time for the front left wheel to grab it and turn us back from the abyss. I'm able to steer back to the right side of the road, without even losing a word in my sentence..."...independent clause, or the difference between a compound and a complex sentence."

"Oh, that would be way beyond the comprehension of my slow section..."

We don't either of us even mention our close shave until we stop for a cup of coffee and to change drivers north of Brattleboro in Dummerston, where route 9 splits off from route 5 and turns east into New Hampshire.

BOOK TWO.19WICKED...and Spotless as the Lamb

Amy II, 1939Chapter Nineteen

-1-

Dear Lyle,

I look forward to Christmas when we will be together again. Maybe you should send Mother a note thanking her for inviting you. I know that your invitation came from me, but I had to have her permission. You needn't make it long, but just a word. You will know what to say. It means a great deal to me to have Mother and Dad welcome you.

I hardly know what happened to Olive. All I know is that in October I heard she resigned from Bennington and had accepted a position in Malden. She doesn't confide in me, and Mother and Dad know something they don't want me to know. Nobody tells me anything. I wonder if she decided to get to the Boston area in order to do graduate work at Boston University. She will take a course there in Education next semester. I know she has given up completely her plan to get a Ph. D. at Bryn Mawr after completing all her graduate courses and working for a year doing research in the British Museum on Middle English bestiaries. She came home with bushels of notes, and supposedly settled down to teach in the Bushnell school while she started her book, and then never got around to get to work on it. She told me once she had lost interest in getting her doctorate in Old and Middle English and settling down for life in some women's college teaching a dead language. Then Amy Cutler resigned as Head of English in the High School and Olive got the job. But all of a sudden she resigned and was gone.

Anyway, I think it might do some good if you write Mother just a brief note.

This year I'm taking piano lessons from Miss Molly. I used to play the violin but gave up because I had such a miserable teacher about as musical as a muskrat, and my violin was no good, either. Miss Molly is a good teacher and we have a lot of fun. I'm doing scales and arpeggios and she gives me some real pieces, like Bach Inventions and Beethoven's Minuet in G, and Handel's Water Music for four hands. At Christmas I think it would be fun if you will play for us to sing Christmas carols. In London it was lovely the way children and young people gathered and went around their neighborhoods knocking on doors and singing "Jolly Old Saint Nicholas," "Silent Night," and "God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen," and all the other carols we used to sing in the Bushnell School and the High School at Christmas.

I like your beginning of a poem with the refrain "Will you remember...?" "Do you remember...?" "Will you remember...?" Now you have got October, November, and December, if you can finish up the rest of the year, you will have something like Spenser's Shepherd's Calendar. Your poem is very musical and reminds me of Housman. I don't seem to be writing much poetry these days since Ted Morrison refused to accept me for his class in creative writing. I must have told you how I begged to get in.

Affectionately,

Amy

PS.

I enclose a seasonal poem:

To _____

Strange is the tune my heart is beating;
Stranger still is the rhythm of yours,
Swift years past us both retreating
Hold out wreaths of thorns and flowers.

I plucked a rose from the hand of summer,
You chose a thorn that grew close by.

Will its keenness perhaps still linger
After the fairest of roses die?

Amy

I hadn't realized Ted Morrison didn't let her into his class at Bread Loaf. I can't understand it. After she was class poet and editor of the Saxonian. We all knew her as the most prominent poet in our class.

About Olive, I can tell she hates Malden, and liked Bennington High School a lot better. If she plans to take courses at B. U., she didn't mention it to me.

-2-

Dear Mrs. Niles,

Thank you for having me for Thanksgiving and all the other times I've visited you. You probably know that I always loved my grandfather's house in North Leverett. Your house reminds me of it. My grandmother held the family together and she has been dead four years, and Gramp has a housekeeper, and it isn't the same. When I was young and foolish and wanted to go to college and thought I never could afford to, I used to think that farming was menial labor, and I wanted the worst way to get away from it, but I know from Gramp and you and Mr. Niles what a wonderful world it can be. Coming to your house is like going out to Gramp's used to be in the old days before Gram died.

Yours truly,

Lyle Glazier

-3-

I have been reading the Salt-Water Ballads of John Masfield, and like them so much that I read The Everlasting Mercy and talked about it in my late afternoon freshman class. Afterwards some of the students begged me to read it aloud, so I scheduled an afternoon reading after next Wednesday's class and announced it in all my freshman sections. To my surprise most

of the class stayed on, and a sprinkling of students from my other two sections. Somehow Prof Rob, the retired head of the drama department, got wind of it, and came.

He's a medium-sized man with a big belly that he pushes against you when talking to you, almost getting right in to your pecker. It's the first time I've met him, but I've been jealous of Earl McGee for getting invitations to go with Prof Rob to a downtown movie on a pass from the owner of Princess Theatre. Earl told me, "He's a nice old man and I'm sorry for him, but he makes me squirm the way he comes at you."

Prof Rob stayed after my reading and after the students left offered to show me how to improve my reading. He sat in back of the room, and as I read, kept cupping his ear and stopping me by saying, "What's that?" or "Please repeat it," and I got the idea I'd been reading too fast and sliding over words, and he really was teaching me something important.

As we walked out together, he said that Mr. and Mrs. Rowe, Dean of Administration, were taking him to Portland the next evening to see a movie, and would I like to come with them? I sat in the back seat with him and mostly listened to their talk about the presentations of Greek Drama Prof Rob used to stage in front of the Library.

"Those days are gone forever," Harry Rowe said. "We miss you."

In the dark theatre Prof Rob kept leaning toward me, then leaning the other way to whisper to Mrs. Rowe and sliding his hand onto my knee. On the ride back to Lewiston, I got very excited. He was always leaning toward the front seat and talking with Mr. and Mrs. Rowe and resting his hand on my knee, now and then moving to hear better and letting his hand slide higher.

Before they let him out at his room on College Street, he gave me a quick, final stroking. At Mountain Avenue, after saying Good Night to the Rows and thanking them, I couldn't for

the life of me find my key to the front door, though I searched in every pocket. It was a pleasant clear, cold night, and I walked back to Collega Street and, seeing a light upstairs, rang the bell, and Prof Rob was at the door in a minute. I told him my problem, and he invited me up for a drink of Port and in a few minutes he was sucking my cock. He invited me to stay all night, but I decided not to. When I got back to Mountain Avenue, I found that the front door had been unlocked all the time, but I was so preoccupied looking for the key, I hadn't tried it.

-4-

Dear Amy,

I have written to your mother thanking her. I really like your house, and I want your mother and father to realize I'm not an ignoramus. I think you know how hard it has been for me not to be able to go home. Even when Larry and I lived in Northfield and Mount Hermon, we never once went back to our old home after leaving it the day of the funeral. Melvin used to go there to collect rent, and then he sold it, but Larry and I couldn't bear to go there, and for the year we lived together in Middlebury when I was doing graduate work and acting as janitor at the Community House, we never mentioned our parents, and the year I was Principal of the Grammar School in Northfield, we could have gone to the house, but never once did. The tenants broke the padlock into the attic and stole all our belongings. Just as well perhaps to make a clean break. We could have gone there and got our stuff, but we just couldn't bring ourselves to.

I think now how hard it was for Lawrence. He was only nine when Mel and I left for college, and I never spent more than a few days at a time at home ever again. I had seen very little of Larry in four years, and still thought of him as around nine rather than thirteen. I even read Winnie the Pooh aloud to him beginning the night of the funeral when we arrived there and

moved a cot up from the utility room and he became as if he were not my little brother but my son. He was a good boy, and we tried to make the best of it, and never even mentioned to each other how we couldn't mention Mom and Pop.

My life is pretty mixed up and you may find it hard to put up with me. Sometimes I wonder if I'll ever manage to make the grade. Here I am teaching at Bates, and the chief thing I have going for me is I love poetry. Compared to you, with your year in London, and your Master's Degree from Brown, and Olive's finishing all the work for a Ph.D., your folks have a right to wonder what you can possibly see in me.

I can't seem to go anywhere with that "remember" poem. Maybe I have to wait for the seasons to catch up with me. "Thorn Crag" is that hill I've told you about about a mile north of the Bates campus, and "Round Top" is a hill in Northfield.

Affectionately,

Lyle

PS. I managed to write only two more stanzas of that poem:

Do you remember
January clean as glass,
brittle parings off the slender
birches where my runners passed?

Will you remember
how over Crag the colors fled
and February's chill pricked under
my jacket to my shoulder blades?

Lyle

-5-

The time between Thanksgiving and Christmas is almost too short. Before we leave for the long holiday, we have to finish first semester and make out final examinations that will be given first thing in January. Also I have my regular themes in

freshman English and carry a full bundle when I leave for our week and a half (two weekends) vacation.

At the last minute I send a telegram to the Huntington Avenue Y, having decided to stay over there one night before visiting Clayton in Northfield. He's still living in the apartment over the drugstore, but baby Donna is chiefly being taken care of by Ruth, Abby's sister, who lives in that double house south of the Town Hall. Clayton has got his job back in the stockroom at Millers Falls Tool Company. He wrote me that Mel and Bernice offered to take Donna but only if they could adopt her, and Clayt refused their offer. Larry is planning to come from Middlebury to spend most of his vacation with Clayt.

When I got to the registration desk at the Y, I found myself in something of a pickle.

"We got your telegram and have reserved a room on the 5th floor in the corridor with the room of our treasurer, but we haven't the slightest idea who you are."

I'm flustered, "I have a Y pass sent me by Dr, Porter, Headmaster at Mount Hermon."

"Oh, then you are a temporary member, but membership in the Y is not like membership in a club."

"I'm an English teacher at Bates College."

"Are you an officer in the Y.M.C.A.?"

"No."

"We're not a hotel. We don't make reservations except for Y.M.C.A, officers and we don't find you listed anywhere."

There are men waiting in line behind me, and I feel myself turning red. I don't feel like a college professor.

"We're putting you in 55A but next time don't send a telegram. You'll have to take your chances with our other transients."

He fills out my form, asks me to sign, and gives me the key.

"You're in a corridor off the transient accommodations. You'll share a bath with our treasurer, Mr. Joseph Smith. This big key is the key to Corridor A, and the small one is the key to your room number 55."

I carry my bag to the fifth floor. I have some trouble with the large key because I don't realize the door to the corridor isn't locked. The door to number 54 is open and an old man in his fifties or sixties grouchily gets up from an armchair and shuts his door. My room is much bigger and better furnished than the one I had at Thanksgiving. I immediately remember my long walk with the owner of the tobacco shop and think it would have been all right to have him here. I have got over my embarrassment, and hurry downstairs and catch a subway back to Park Street, and walk along Boylston to the tobacco shop, but inside there's only a night light. I try the door handle and it's locked.

I walk to the streetcorner crossing with Huntington, and all the way back and have a sandwich at the same drugstore, and then go up to my room. The door to 54 is still shut. I take a towel and go down to the basement for a swim. There are a lot of men swimming, but I feel naked and keep to myself. Later, there are only a few in the shower room, and after a while most of them leave, and a tall man comes over to the stall next to mine and keeps soaping himself and turning this way and that way. I begin to feel myself carrying an erection. For a long while we keep twisting and turning under the pelting stream from our faucets. I don't look at him directly, but he keeps showing himself, and although I'm looking away, I'm showing myself to him. We linger for a long time. It begins to be painful. I grab my towel, wrap it around, and walk to my locker. He immediately joins me. I think he is in his late twenties, nice looking, with a good cock.

He asks, "Are you here overnight?"

"Yes."

"Me, too. What floor?"

"I can't have anybody. I'm in a special corridor on the fifth floor."

"I'm on the tenth. Why don't I join you?"

I'm dressing in a hurry. I don't answer. I'm suddenly scared. When I take the elevator, I can see him standing back there with his clothes off looking at me.

I spend a long time lying awake in bed. There's no sign of life from the other room. I'm wishing the owner of the tobacco shop had been still there. I think it would have been perfectly all right to have had him here. There's no sign on the door that I couldn't have a guest. Or I think of the young man in the shower and wish I had had courage to bring him. I think first of one and then the other of them and really want either of them or both of them. I think that if one of them came with me, after he left I would be thinking of the other.

-6-

Christmas is like Thanksgiving, except we eat Christmas dinner in the kitchen instead of the room by the fireplace. The Christmas tree takes up a good deal of space. Walter got the tree from the east pasture, and Olive and Amy got out the box of tinsel (red and silver ropes) and glass balls and figurines, and the three of us spend Christmas Eve trimming the tree. I have only one present -- for Amy, so I'm glad there are not a lot for me. I gave her another box of silk doilies trimmed with Lithuanian embroidery by Joe Bilson's wife.

On Christmas night, the Lillies came in -- Margaret and Earl and Betty and Frances and Timmy -- and we sang Christmas carols in the drawing room. Amy and Olive insisted I play the piano. I like to play carols and hymns because if you put weight on your fourth and fifth fingers in your right hand, you can bring out the melody above the harmony, as if the piano has a soprano voice of its own.

The day after Christmas Olive and I spent all morning and most of the afternoon correcting compositions in the southeast sitting room. We didn't talk much except once she remarked on my lengthy comments. Without thinking, I passed her the paper I was working on. I have a way of talking to a student, and I was embarrassed by this girl's paper on Whitman's Song of Myself. We have had a personal connection because at the beginning of the year she told me her English teacher in Skowhegan, David Hawes, had met me at Bread Loaf and told her to be sure to remember him to me. Now she is telling me sweetly that she doesn't like at all my implication that the speaker in Part 5 of Whitman's poem may be making love to another man: she is talking of her teacher as if he is Biblical: "David--my David--would never say anything like that about a great poem." As always, when I'm attacked directly, I cringe and don't know how to reply, so I wrote a marginal note: "From meeting David at Bread Loaf I am sure he is a great teacher."

Olive read the comment and tossed the paper back, "I don't see that she has said anything in the way of criticizing the poem." And of course Olive is absolutely right. So I add another sentence: "How do you interpret the poem?" Privately I realize my first comment was evasive and cowardly, and by letting Olive read it I probably have gone down in her opinion. I am forever getting into a situation where what I take most pride in (like my talking directly to a student in my comment) turns out to be less self flattering than I intended.

Olive and everybody else in the family clear out of the sitting room in the evening, and leave it to us. We spend hours on the loveseat, where I'm cradling Amy and we're talking in low voices about poetry and our plans for the future. I realize we are getting deeper and deeper into a relationship. I sense in her a need to find somebody to confide in. She needs somebody to fill out her life in the same way I need somebody to fill out

mine. Although I have this obsessive sexual attraction toward men, I'm becoming sure I could never live with a man.

-7-

Dear Lyle,

Mother and I were delighted to have your Christmas greetings from Bennington. We both remember and often talk about your coming here after writers' conference a year and a half ago. In fact, I decided on the spur of the moment to come visit you in Lewiston on the first weekend in February, so expect me to turn up on your doorstep in early evening Friday that week. I particularly want to visit your Saturday class in American Literature. I hope you can find an overnight place for me to sleep. Unfortunately, I will have to leave after lunch that day.

Your friend,

Thyra

I found a room for her at the Vosmi. It was nearly nine o'clock when she arrived at the Irelands so tired she was ready to go to bed. I took her immediately to the Vosmi, where she parked her car. Mr. and Mrs. Vosmus and Mrs. Young were all on hand to greet her, and we had toast and jam and coffee in their diningroom. I could see they were consumed with curiosity why I had this sudden visit from a young lady friend. I had an idea why she came, but when we sat down for our evening repast, we pretended neither of us to have anything on our mind but her decision to visit my class.

"What are you reading this week?"

"It happens we're doing Emily Dickinson. I've assigned three lyrics, from which each of them is supposed to choose one and be prepared to ask a question or give some kind of explanation of an image or a word or of her rhyme or meter."

"Oh, I will like that. What are the poems?"

"'A route of evanescence,' 'The soul selects her own society,' and 'The last night that she lived.'"

"Wonderful. Will you lecture?"

"Not if I can help it. I have also asked them to look at three more, so if we exhaust the discussion of the first three we may go on to 'The bustle in a house,' 'A narrow fellow in the grass,' and 'I heard a fly buzz when I died.'" I've asked them to look for a focal image, and for the rhyme scheme, and for what I call the lyric turn, where the poem seems to catch its breath and catch on to where it is going."

"I'm taking a course with F. O. Matthiessen."

"I've heard of him, but we don't do much secondary source reading."

"Neither does he. He's a great teacher, very popular. His seminar in American Renaissance is very hard to get into. I am lucky to be in it."

I didn't invite her to my 8:0'clock freshman English. When I went to get her at 9:15, I found she had got up early and had breakfast with Nellie Mae Lang and had gone for a walk to the riverbank and back.

She sat in the back of my class and asked not to be introduced. Everybody was there, and the class went well, I thought. We managed to get through all three of the poems assigned for student preparation, and went on to 'A fly buzzed' and at the last moment a hand waggled and there was an interesting question on 'A narrow fellow in the grass...'

"Why did she say 'Yet when a boy and barefoot, I more than once... have passed...'?"

It was almost the end of the hour and I had to give the assignment, so I said, "For the same reason Mark Twain began Huckleberry Finn with 'You don't know about me unless you read a book called The Adventures of Tom Sawyer...written by Mr. Mark Twain..." But I cheated because I had assigned that poem in preparation for that very question.

The only thing Thyra said about the class was, "Matthiessen would have done only one poem."

Dear Lyle,

I never told you that at Christmas after you left with Olive, Mother showed me your letter. She huffed and said, "I guess he doesn't have much use for farmers." She and Dad are worried that you and I may get married. I had a long letter from her telling me all the things I will have to get used to: "For the first time in your life, you won't have enough to live on." I think she is telling me you will be marrying me for my money. That seems to be on their mind. I think I can help you. I'd like to get some sort of job and help you earn Larry's tuition. We would have my car. I have a little money saved up and I hope you are not so proud as not to let me pay off that \$1,000 you owe Middlebury. There's no reason to keep paying interest on that. I've seen enough of what happens when people fight over money. Mother and Dad sit for hours at the table after supper wrangling over whether it's her money or his if they kill a hog or make head cheese and Dad sells it on his produce route in Old Bennington. They have to split every dollar of profit and figure out how much Mother earns in preparing meals for threshers or he earns from the cheese she churns in the back kitchen. If they would pool everything, half their troubles would be over, but then I guess they would have nothing to talk about. All they talk about is money. After they argue all evening, they go to bed and argue some more. I can hear them up over them in my bedroom. I don't want us to get into that kind of competition, whose bank account is larger, who ought to get the larger share of this dollar or that dime. I think that hearing them argue is one of the reasons I had all that stomach trouble when I was little. I always took Mother's side, but there was no reason for any of it. I'm sick and tired of it.

I've had something on my mind, and I'd better get it off my chest or it will be too late. We have one of those New York

State midsemester breaks the end of February, and I'd like to come visit you if possible. I know you will be busy with classes, but I would try not to make a nuisance of myself. Maybe you can find a room for me near the Irelands. I have a great curiosity to find out what Lewiston and the College look like. Please let me know if it is possible. I want very much to come -- if you will have me. I would come by bus on a Wednesday afternoon, and have to leave Friday in order to have a free day here before driving to LeRoy on Sunday. Henry Richardson will be driving with me on the way home and when we return to LeRoy, He likes to drive more than I do. I'll pick him up in Amsterdam.

Please say yes and let me know soon so I can make plans well in advance.

Lovingly

Amy

PS -- Another poem:

New Year's

Past the headland new horizons
Flash upon a morning sea,
And the course is finally charted
For eternity.

Amy

Since Amy will be coming for supper on Wednesday and Thursday, I have to tell Mrs. Vosmus and the news gets to Earl and Joe Conant and Eleanor and Nellie Mae Lang, who will all be there. Then I hear that somebody has told Professor and Mrs. Sweet, a new young couple in the History Department. I have a telephone call from Anne at the Irelands and she invited Amy to stay the two nights with them.

"I really appreciate it. I accept for her -- with the proviso you don't go to any more trouble. Amy won't want to

have a great to do made of her visit. I've already made arrangements for her to have meals with me at the Vosmi."

Also, since the news has got out, I think I have to tell Eddie Wright, so I call him:

"My Middlebury classmate Amy Niles will be visiting me next Wednesday and Thursday and, if possible I want you to meet her, but with the provision that we will just come in to say hello if you have time late Thursday afternoon."

"Can you come for tea at four?"

"OK, Eddie, a marvelous thought, but remember, nobody else. This is a hurried visit, and I don't want to wear out Amy with meeting a lot of people."

"Good, then, tea at four."

-9-

Amy arrives on the afternoon bus, and I take her straight to the Sweets' where she has a very nice room. It is clear that Professor and Mrs. Sweet think it's an important occasion. Although they don't say a word to suggest it, I can tell they think Amy is going to play a large part in my life. I rather like the feeling, and believe Amy does, too.

We have just time for us to stop by for me to introduce Amy to the Irelands and hurry for dinner at the Vosmi. Earl has brought a paperbag in the pocket of his overcoat. All of them, Earl and Joe and Eleanor and Nellie Mae are treating Amy the way the Sweets did. After dinner Eleanor invites the five of us to her attic, where we have Earl's bottle of wine and some biscuits Eleanor furnished. We don't play Bridge. Later Amy and I have our first time to ourselves. We walk along Mountain Avenue to Campus and turn north on the road to Thorn Crag.

We are talking about poetry. I ask her if her poem about one person choosing a rose and another a thorn has any relation to Emerson's poem Days.

"Yes it does. I'll never forget the time Doc Cook asked the class how to interpret that poem, and I thought I had a good

answer, and he ridiculed me in front of the class. I thought it is about how we miss our opportunities, but he said, 'No, it isn't that at all. It's about hypocrisy. The days are not benevolent but "hypocritical" and scornful. They're all-knowing. Emerson's sympathy is with the poet, who chooses the herbs and apples.' I suppose he was right, but I couldn't see it then and don't clearly even now."

"It's a cryptic poem. I guess I agree with you. In your poem you have "swift years past us both retreating." I'm not sure about "past -- p a s t, not p a s s e d" and I notice that the unabridged dictionary gives p a s t as a variant for the past tense. Is that what you intend?"

"No, I meant it simpler than that. 'Past us both' is a prepositional phrase -- The years past us both -- it's the years that are retreating past us both and as they retreat, we select their gifts..."

"Then the years are retreating as we are advancing..."

"Yes, in exactly the way the days are in Emerson's poem."

"That's what I thought. You make us work for your meaning the same way Emerson does."

"I like your poems better."

"Yours are more philosophical."

"Yours are down to earth."

"But do they get anywhere? I've written another about an ice storm we had, and I tried to walk on Mount David, that granite nub you saw across from the Irelands. It dominates our neighborhood."

"How does your poem go?"

"I can't quote it -- only the first few lines:

Walking in Maine these days is an experience
that doesn't justify the name of walking..."

"See what I mean. Your poems are colloquial. Mine are blah."

"Yours are philosophical."

"So are yours but in a different way."

I don't tell her my poem has been accepted by American Prefaces.

It's a cold night and when we get to Thorn Crag we sit on a ledge and look back on the lights of the city. To keep warm we bundle together.

"Lyle, I think it's time we made up our mind about each other. I'm ready to give up my job in LeRoy."

"I still can't see my way clear to get married."

"You will be twenty-eight in another two months and I will be next December. Are you as lonely as I am?"

For a few minutes we don't talk, then I ask, "Do you think we can make a go of it?"

"If that's a proposal, I say Yes."

We stop for a long kiss, huddled together.

"Lyle, can you come for Easter? I have the old-fashioned notion I'd like you to ask permission from Dad. I think he would like it."

"I don't mind. If your father and mother agree I want to give you a ring. Perhaps we can buy one in Bennington. I want you to help pick it out."

-10-

I don't stop in Boston or Northfield on the way to Easter vacation. The first night after supper, it's all arranged ahead of time that before doing dishes, Mother goes into her bedroom and Amy and Olive into the front east sitting room.

Mr. Niles and I sit at the table. I get right down to business. "Mr. Niles, I've asked Amy to marry me, and she wants me to ask permission from you."

I can see it's a really important occasion for him. I'm glad I'm not asking permission of President Gray: "Harrumph, young man, are you seriously concerned for the welfare of my daughter?" I wonder if Walter had to ask permission from Henry

Stafford before marrying Mrs. Niles. I'm pretty sure that he did. Anyway, he has gone very serious.

He says, "Amy appears to think a good deal of you. Do you think she and you can make a go of it financially? I know you have your brother to support."

"Amy and I have given a good deal of thought to it. Larry will be working somewhere this summer. I try to pay his tuition and board and room. Amy is going to try to find some kind of teaching job in Lewiston. I think she ought to apply now at both the Lewiston High School and the Auburn High School across the river. I do know for a fact that Lewiston is probably not going to need anybody new this coming year, but I don't know about Auburn. Larry has told me that if he can make it through this coming year, he would like to take a year off and work in the Millers Falls Tool Company, and live with my younger brother, Clayton. That way he will pretty much take care of his junior year the same way I took care of my freshman year at Middlebury."

"What about this coming year?"

"I'll have no trouble meeting his first semester bills. I've been planning on it. If Amy and I can find a small apartment, I think what I pay for board and room will come close to supporting us, barring accidents."

"Do you have any reason to think you have a steady job there?"

"I talked to my chairman. He has already met Amy. He knows I am thinking of getting married."

"Well, Lyle, so far as I know you are a hard worker and a man of good character. Mrs. Niles and I have talked this over and I guess I can speak for us both. If Amy wants you, you have my consent."

We shake hands on it.

I go into the living room and Amy and I and Olive come back to do supper dishes. Walter has gone to the barn. Mrs. Niles doesn't come out of the bedroom again that evening.

In the late morning, Amy and I drive downtown in her car, and she helps me find a jewelry shop, where we go in and spend a good half hour looking over rings with small karat diamonds that I can afford. A lot of the settings are elaborate, but the one I choose is very plain, and though the diamond is hardly visible, it is a real diamond. The jeweler gives Amy a fitting, and we get the ring on the spot. Amy has already set the middle of July for the wedding, which will be there at home on the west lawn if the weather is good.

The next afternoon, Mrs. Niles goes with us to the same jeweler to pick out silver. Amy insists I come with them, but all I do is stand back and watch as they study various patterns displayed by the same man who sold me the ring.

Mrs. Niles says, "I don't want anything cheap. It has to last a lifetime."

"I understand, Mrs. Niles. I wouldn't think of showing you anything but the very best we have to offer."

It's a lengthy proceeding, but finally I'm enlisted to pass judgment on the simple pattern Amy has chosen. It is far more extensive than any set of silver I have ever had anything to do with.

With the pattern decided on, the jeweler asks, "And I suppose you will want it initialed?"

Mrs. Niles says, "Yes, of course."

"And the initial?"

"An N."

Amy objects strenuously, "I don't want an N on my silver."

The jeweler asks, "And what will the initial be?"

"When I get married, my initial will be G."

Mother says, "If it can't be N, then it won't be initialed."

Amy says, "I won't spend the rest of my life with the wrong initial on my silver."

Studiously avoiding looking at me, Mrs. Niles snaps, "There's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip."

And to the jeweler, "No initial."

-11-

Earl and Joe have taken to coming for lunch fresh from Joe's class in Greek which Earl has been auditing. In a short time they hardly bothered to say Hello but continued throughout lunch, so absorbed in their epistemological pursuit that they paid no attention to what they were eating. After dessert they got up and walked out still talking. I might as well not have been there. I stood it a week and a half, then asked Mrs. Vosmus if I could have late lunch with Nellie Mae, who came every day at 1:15 after her last class at the high school.

In fine April weather I began carrying freshman compositions to the bank of the Androscoggin where a spine of granite ledge jutted into the sluggish inshore current. Lifting my eyes from a paper, I could consider the comment I was composing, mentally canceling a word and choosing another more apt. I was trying to shift my point of view to the mind of the student who would be reading what I was trying to tell him: "Is this word apt? Would 'anticipate' convey your intention better?"

Sometimes my thoughtstream would stray to the mercantile landscape across the river, or the surface tension of the current would be shattered by a leaping dace or by a school of water bugs skating an endless ballet on buoyant feet, mesmerized with their endless gyrations. For me the river landscape melted into the inner landscape of my mind as I tried to pursue the right word or phrase to respond to the faltering insight of the student.

I'm not sure how long it took for me to become aware of other distractions. At the end of a long afternoon, collecting

papers for the journey back to Mountain Avenue, I might become aware that out of the corner of my eye I had been registering a response to being observed now and again by some musing spectator on the riverside path, pausing, perhaps, to contemplate the writer narcotized by his introspection.

I was being inspected by a series of shadowy strangers passing up or down the path, pausing a moment to study the view. They were too inconsequential to be more than filed away in the limbo of my consciousness from where they almost instantly lost any semblance of individual presence. However, I couldn't dismiss the fact they were there.

There might be a recurrent face. Among them the pasty face of a tall late-teenaged boy, who reappeared at more and more frequent intervals until, one day having organized my papers, instead of turning back the route I had come, I turned the other way and walked upstream into the edge of a grove of trees, where the boy stood looking at me. I walked directly to him, and we embraced and masturbated each other.

I was immediately scared, and beat a retreat.

I stay away from the riverbank, then with a new set of papers to correct, I think, How foolish you are being, You can go there and be careful not to have anything more to do with the boy. And, true, it is all right. I don't see him that day or the next, and not until the very last day when I have only a few papers left, and he shows up and I turn toward campus, relieved to have escaped. Then at the edge of the crossing, after I've stepped carefully over the shining rails and splintery-dry ties, I turned and hurried back to him. I felt terrible on the way home and resolved never to do it again.

To make sure, I correct my final exams on the west slope of Mount David.

-12-

Dearest Lyle,

I can hardly believe we have only three weeks before the fifteenth of July. I think we were right not to try to get together until then. Thanks for sending the list for your family. I sent a copy to Mother but kept the original. I am glad you are going to Gramp's. It seems right to have you there for the two weeks after you wind up your work in Lewiston. I have your letter that you've got a receipt from Mrs. Reynolds. It will be heavenly having her cottage for a whole month.

I'm sorry Skip will be too busy starting work with W. W. Norton. I know you wanted him for best man. I think you have done right to select Larry in his place. It seems to me just right for him to have a major part in our wedding.

I'll be getting in touch with you a good many times before then. Don't forget to get the blood test. We can't get married in Vermont without it.

When I showed your ring to my friends, it was admired by all except Willie Burton, Principal of the Grammar School, who came along when I was showing it to Orville Sweeting and Mildred Burton, both of whom were congratulating me. Henry Richardson was with Willie. When Willie belittled the size of my diamond, Henry said, "If I were to give a ring to a girl, it would be just like that one."

Don't worry that your clothes won't be new. Your white flannels and light blue jacket will be just right. I'm glad Rollin agreed to perform the ceremony and that he and Helen will bring Ma Hagar with them when they drive down from East Middlebury. I'm not surprised that your grandfather can't come, but it will be good to have Grandma Briggs and Uncle Forrest and Aunt Iona from Brattleboro.

Most of my relatives and friends will come for the shower on the 12th, Olive's birthday. I would like it simple, but I suppose, with Olive and Mother managing it, the whole kit and kaboodle will be here. Mother's cousin Roy Stafford and Julia are invited for the wedding and Mother has invited them for

overnight. Dan Mason's wife Anna will bring the wedding cake, and you can be sure it will be handsomely decorated. I would have preferred to have something simple, like cookies and lemonade, but Mother insists on more, so we will have egg salad sandwiches and chicken sandwiches and homemade root beer.

I'm glad you wanted a double ring ceremony. I suppose I should warn you not to forget to bring them, but I will not underestimate your reliability, except to admonish you not to forget the date nor forget to have yourself and Larry on time.

With all my love,

Amy

PS. Mary Priscilla will drive over from Ashfield but Emory will be too busy with haying to come.

Amy

-13-

Earl McGee stopped me on campus: "Lyle, I've been talking to Eddie about dropping my Six Poets section. I'm not a poet and have no right to be teaching it. We've decided I can substitute a class in Eighteenth Century Fiction and Drama. Would you like to have my Six Poets? I've recommended it to Eddie, and he agrees if you want it."

I'm flabbergasted. When Eddie calls me in to discuss it, I say little more than Yes. It'll be Robinson, Tennyson, and Milton first semester, and Wordsworth, Keats and Shelley the second. Eddie happens to have on hand desk copies for both semesters and passes them on to me. I know what I'll be reading this summer. I'll keep my two sections of Am Lit and drop one section of freshmen.

-14-

My best student in freshman English this year has been Lysander Kemp, whose father is a physician in some institution for adolescent boys in Canton in southern Massachusetts not far from the coast. They have a summer place in Dennis on the Cape. 'Doc' began submitting poems instead of prose compositions, when

I gave poetry as an option. He's the most promising student poet I've had, except I learned after the first three papers that he thought he had been writing blank verse, but the lines were hexameter.

I happened to run into him the afternoon after his last exam, and on a sudden impulse invited him to go with me by trolley downtown and over to the end of the line in Auburn, where we walked across the hayfield to a tent where they were presenting a notorious film, Ecstasy, with Heddy LaMarr. The paper warned there might be a police raid, but there wasn't. The film was beautiful with lots of running-in-the-woods nakedness and promise of sex. It was a lovely evening, and all the way over and back, we were talking like mad about poetry and life. I told him I'm getting married in July and he gave me his address on the Cape.

-15-

I've had a letter from Skip, apologizing again for not being at my wedding. "I have this chance to go to work for Norton right after graduation. It's a kind of apprenticeship, but I think the job is pretty sure if I don't mess it up. I'll be traveling representative visiting colleges and universities, brokering Norton titles. Mumsie is coming for graduation, and if you can stop overnight on your way to Gramp's the three of us may have a chance to have dinner together. You can stay here at the House overnight."

Hoping to see you soon. As ever,
Skip

-16-

Freshman papers corrected and grades turned in, to celebrate I walked after supper over to the riverside and sat on the granite outcrop extending toward the Bates mills across on the Auburn shore. In a dull mood, I opened my notebook and read over the first stanza of a poem I started composing before exams:

The pines are putting out their tender spikes
against the sky's incredibly deep blue,
a growth of birch and alder screens the brook,
wire grass breaks through the sand lot, on the rocks
that jut from the river's edge, the moss
makes armadillo mounds, the slope is brown
with last year's needles sifted down with snow,
high overhead wind-twisted, rugged boughs
tear from the clouds great handfuls of white wool
and shred it out across the sky...

That's where I left off day before yesterday. Now I finished
off the stanza:

gently

a breeze is ringing all the tiny bells
of blueberry bushes waiting for rain.

I sat there absentmindedly, looking up from the page.
Through flat layers of gray and amber clouds the sun had set.

I began to scratch out in a different mood:

Wet rot, like a blanket, smothers the wind,
the brook stagnates in crudded vinegar pools
and on the river, thick with jellied slime,
scum creeps and stale mists rise...

Suddenly chill, I closed the book.

It is getting too dark to write. I start back along the
path, meeting a young man who has just crossed the tracks. In
the half dusk, his face is a yellowish tan and I think he's a
Negro, but when he speaks there's no trace of dialect. His
accents are warm and southern but cultivated.

"You out late tonight, boy. Warm tonight."

"Yes but getting chilly."

"You live around here?"

I motion toward the streets east of us, "Over there."

"I'm coming through in a boxcar. Over on the siding. Want
to come see?"

I don't say anything. He sits down and pulls off a spear of grass and sucks on the stem.

I sit opposite him.

"You writing something?"

"Nothing important."

"I betcha you're doing your homework."

"You could call it that."

"Your father and mother let you stay out late?"

"They don't mind."

"I bet you're a good student."

I don't reply.

"Come here and sit beside me."

I shrug my shoulders, then obey.

He flops around and stretches full length beside me. He reaches over and touches my leg above the ankle. "You a runner? You got a nice muscle."

He rolls nearer and runs his hand higher up under my trouser leg. "You got a real nice muscle."

It's really dark now.

"We could go over to the boxcar."

I am passive. I don't say anything.

He pushes me gently back until I am outstretched beside him. He begins working at my belt and pulls down my pants. "You got a real nice body. You smooth."

His voice is husky in my ear. He is working at his pants, and in a minute, he is turning me half over and pushing between the folds of my ass. He is gently crowding in there, and I try to accommodate myself to him. He's whispering, "I don't hurt you."

He's working back and forth but can't seem to get in and I can't seem to let him. After a while it begins to hurt. He's breathing hard, but I think he's being careful not to scare me away. He doesn't want to hurt me. I'm beginning to hurt more and more, as if he is too dry. Nobody has ever touched me like

that before. I give him a good long while, then roll away from him and start zipping my pants and belting my trousers.

He doesn't try to stop me. "When you get home, don't tell your folks. You come back see me later tonight. I'll be in the third boxcar, the door will be open. You just climb up in there any time of night, I'll be waiting for you. Remember, the third boxcar. Just climb in, I'll be waiting."

I'm in a hurry to get home and see the damage. I shut my door carefully, and take off my clothes and use the hand mirror to study myself. With my free hand I lift off the bedside lamp and hold it down to see better. It looks red and raw, and I wonder if I've caught a disease.

I can hardly sleep. The next morning when I'm proctoring American Literature, I feel it all the time, and I feel as if I'm straddling when I walk. I'm trying to be careful and not show it. In the afternoon I find a shady spot on Mount David and manage to finish the first section.

In the evening I am all worked up from studying myself with the hand mirror. I remember that Eleanor McCue has this young doctor who is her friend and who is always friendly to me when we meet. I look up his home address in the phone book, and go over there. I walk past the house, then walk around the block and back. This time I ring the bell marked with his name. He lives on the second floor. He is very considerate. He looks me over and asks, "What have you been doing?"

I say, "Right now we are having exams and I'm correcting papers."

"All is, you've been sitting too long on a hard chair. If you will go to a drugstore, you can find a blow-up rubber cushion. Get one and sit on it when you're correcting, and if you want to use some cold cream or vaseline, use some but not too much, just a little, and in a couple of days, you'll be OK."

He won't take any pay. As a matter of fact, I'm already feeling better to know he hasn't found evidence of any disease.

I sleep better, and go downtown in the morning and get a jar of cold cream and an inflatable rubber doughnut. In twenty-four hours I hardly hurt any at all, and in forty-eight by the time I'm packed to take the bus for Boston, I'm back to normal.

-17-

My last afternoon before leaving, I have a phone call from Eddie Wright. He asks if he can come over. I say sure.

"I'll be right there."

I wonder why in the world he can want to see me and hope he hasn't changed his mind about my teaching Six Poets. Since he lives just a couple of houses down on the side street, in a minute I hear him downstairs talking to Mrs. Ireland, and then hear him on the stairs. I am at my door waiting for him. He tells me he, too, is getting married this summer. He's marrying a young woman who has been coming to Bates every summer to teach Education courses in summer school. I think he acts nervous and I feel a bit superior because I'm so much younger and don't have any qualms about getting married -- except I do wonder if I'm biting off more than I can chew. I gather from him that he may be a lot more anxious than I. I suppose I feel better for noticing how much more worked up he seems to be.

-18-

I'm out to Gramp's helping with haying and one time working with Gramp in the mill. He doesn't have a housekeeper. Aunt Helen brings down a main dish for supper. I manage for breakfast and lunch and make some kind of dessert for supper.

I'd been there a week when after supper Amy appeared in the dooryard driving her new Chevrolet. I introduced her to Gramp and then we walked up into the pasture beyond the ice house and stretched out in the grass.

I'm surprised to see her and happy she wanted to see me so bad she drove all the way from Bennington. We are lying there, her head propped on my arm, and we are looking up at the sky full of clouds, when she breaks down and starts crying.

"I hate Mother. I want to get away from that house. After we get married I never want to see it again. My blood test came back positive. Dr.Browning was away on vacation, and I had to go to another doctor. When I went back for the results, he told me it was positive. He wouldn't believe me when I told him I've never had sex. He acted as if I'm a prostitute and said, 'That's what you all say. Without sex there's no way you could get syphilis.'

"I had to go home and tell Mother, and she got on the phone to him. When she told him who she was, he said send me back and he'd give ma a new test. Mother said no matter how the test came back we had to go through with the wedding. Everybody has been invited. Everybody would know something happened. She made me promise I wouldn't tell you.

"When I went in to be tested again, he said, 'Why didn't you tell me you are Laura Stafford's daughter? I would have known there was a mistake.'

"I nearly died waiting. Mother hardly spoke to me. I'm sure she told Olive because Olive was standoffish. It was awful. If the test came back positive I would have tried to commit suicide, and I would have."

All through this I am holding her and patting her and, when I can get in a word edgewise, telling her, "You couldn't possibly have syphilis."

"I had to wait two days. He called me to come in. He said he had good news. When he gave me the certificate, he was apologizing all over. He said, 'It sometimes happens. There's some kind of mixup in the lab. Anyway you're all right now.'

"I got the test back this afternoon, and carried it home to Mother, and told her I was coming right out to see you. She tried to persuade me to wait till after the wedding.

"She said, 'What will Lyle think?'"

"I said, 'I'm going right out to tell him!' Lyle, I want you to come back with me and stay overnight. You can come back here tomorrow."

I said, "Of course I'll come."

We told Gramp I would be gone overnight. He said, "Take good care of him, young lady." I could see he liked Amy and understood why we wanted to be together.

I drove the car, mostly one handed, with Amy not saying anything but snuggled against me. It seemed very warm and cosy to have her. We took the shortcut through Greenfield meadow. Thankfully it was late enough when we got there so Mrs. Niles and Walter were in bed. Amy slept all night with me on the loveseat. We didn't have sex but the next thing to it.

The next morning everybody was quiet at breakfast. Mrs. Niles was not unfriendly, It seemed strange that all three women could behave as if nothing had happened. I wondered if Walter had been told anything. Amy had an appointment with a dressmaker around 11:00, and Olive drove me back to North Leverett in her car.

-19-

I almost didn't get married. Melvin in Greenfield was supposed to pick up my powder blue jacket and white flannels from the dry cleaner.

He phoned me at Gramp's, "Was there supposed to be some pants, too? I got only a jacket. They said all there was."

"Look, tell them find my britches. Hour late already, I'm sitting here in my underwear."

A half hour later: "They found your pants in sludge at bottom of the vat. Had to wring them out and press them."

"You got them?"

"Yes. Bernice and I'll be there three quarters of an hour."

"You're already two and a half hours late. Supposed to be in Bennington, call Amy. Have to pick up Larry at Mount Hermon."

"He called me. Clayt can't come. Had to work. Larry will come with Rena."

At my feet I had the boxed orange Kitten from Gramp. I thought, we will name him Junior to make people talk.

Mel and Larry held us up more at Bennington Blue Diner. I was pacing the space between tables.

Amy's voice over the phone was sweet and short, didn't mention my call came three hours late. "I still have to dress. I spent the morning at the hairdresser's. Dad planted two hemlock on the back lawn. Dug in east pasture. He heard a 'Huff!' and a cub bear made off in the blueberry brush. Dad shouldered the saplings out of there."

White dress, white roses, pink such pink cheeks, on Olive's arm she came around the south corner of the ancient house, where we waited, Larry and Rollin and I.

After the brief ceremony, I told Amy, "You sounded as if you meant it."

On the way in to parlor, Rawl jumped ahead of Mother, puffing toward the screen door. "Congratulations on your new son."

As if put on ice with the chicken and egg sandwiches, "That remains to be seen."

Even after the two hundred mile drive to Lake Elmore, what Mother said was not enough to dampen my spirits.

At the lake cottage at midnight, in the upstairs unfinished bedroom, I crawled in beside my wife bare naked, and helped her out of Olive's wedding present, my mind on Amy's contentment.

A half hour later on the path uphill to the shithouse, I paused naked, the night vibrating. After taking my pee, I hurried back downhill and upstairs to crawl into bed beside my waiting and fragrant wife.

CODA; Two days later, in the mail, BENNINGTON BANNER:

"Big doings out at Nileses' yesterday: Walter lost his best heifer broke out of pasture, lost his daughter, saw a bear."